GUARDIAN WEEKLY
April 20 1997

Motor Racing Argentine Grand Prix

Villeneuve stops to conquer

Alan Henry in Buenos Aires

JACQUES Villeneuve and the Williams team scored a brilliantly measured and tactically astute victory in the Argentine Grand Prix here in sweltering conditions last Sunday. The Canadian driver defied a debilitating stomach bug to score a split-second victory over Eddie Irvine's hard-charging Ferrari.

Villeneuve used a three-pit-stop strategy to scramble home 0.9sec ahead of the Ulsterman, who opted for two stops.

Villeneuve had felt so drained and dehydrated after the morning's warm-up that he cancelled all his promotional activities in order to rest before the 72-lap third round of the world championship.

"It was a tough race," he said. "The only problem with the car came when the gear lever was getting stuck just after my first refuelling stop, but I also blistered a front tyre in the closing stages and Eddie was certainly quicker than us towards the end."

For the last 10 laps the two drivers were seldom more than a second apart, Irvine trying every trick to pressure his exhausted rival into a mistake. But Villeneuve played things as gently as he dared, hanging on to win despite locking a brake as he entered the last corner.

Jordan celebrated their 100th grand prix with Ralf Schumacher storming through to third place, after surviving a collision with his team-mate Giancarlo Fisichella. Said Schumacher: "It was really bad what happened with Giancarlo. He is very angry now and I understand this as the mistake was all my fault."

Meanwhile Johnny Herbert's Sauber pipped Mika Hakkinen's McLaren into fourth place by 0.4sec, and Damon Hill's Arrows ran in the top six from the start but retired with mechanical problems after 33 laps.

Hill said: "I had an overheating problem and then lost air pressure, which meant something happened in the engine and we just had to stop."

At the start Heinz-Harald Frentzen, after qualifying second to his team-mate Villeneuve, had a heart-stopping moment just before the final parade lap when his car proved reluctant to fire and he almost failed to get away in time to take his place in the final grid order.

Villeneuve made a perfect getaway from pole position, but then Rubens Barrichello's Stewart, which had qualified in fifth place, was tipped into a spin and was then rammed by Michael Schumacher's Ferrari, which had been slow away from fourth place on the grid. David Coulthard's McLaren swerved to the right and clipped Ralf Schumacher's Jordan, ripping off the Scot's left front wheel.

Instead of the race being red-flagged to a halt for the third time in the three grands prix so far this year, the safety car was deployed and the pack filed round behind it until the debris was cleared from the circuit.

With three laps completed the safety car was withdrawn and the race resumed, Villeneuve, Frentzen and Olivier Panis sprinting away from the rest of the pack with the Frenchman initially keeping pace with the Williams pair. Michael Schumacher and Coulthard were out, but Barrichello returned to the fray only to retire later with mechanical problems.

Frentzen's run of ill fortune continued when he dropped out midway through lap five, leaving Panis with a clear run at the world championship points leader.

After 10 laps Villeneuve began to pull clear but, with Panis expected to make only a single refuelling stop and Villeneuve two, Alain Prost's protégé looked well placed for his second grand prix win. However, the Frenchman, rolled to a halt with mechanical problems on the 19th lap.

With 20 laps completed Villeneuve was 19sec ahead of Irvine with Fisichella third from Herbert and Ralf Schumacher. Hill had been running a strong sixth until the over-exuberant Jean Alesi pitched both of them into a spin at the start of lap 18. They resumed their battle after losing four places.

Villeneuve led through his first refuelling stop but Irvine's two-stop strategy saw the Ferrari ahead from lap 39 to lap 44, when he made his second stop. On lap 56 Villeneuve stopped for the third time, emerging 4.4sec ahead of Irvine; he drove the race of his life to stay ahead.

● Williams have agreed a new deal with their main sponsor, Rothmans, for next year. It is believed to be worth around $32 million.

Cryptic crossword by Pasquale

Across

1 One to take cover beside hill (6)
4 Deformation isn't evident when there's elaborate make-up (8)
9 Split flower-bulb (5)
10 Sporting achievements that upset the achievements of haymakers? (3,6)
11 Police scheme gets drug character brought back (5,4)
12 This lofty dwelling is said to be weird (5)
13 Brawnier brat wrecked country home (6,6)
17 Left in African country, friend without hesitation goes into big business (12)
20 Monarch backing the first female magistrate (5)
21 Girl and a boy grabbing old books with detailed explanations (9)
23 Gushing liquid is a concern when flowing back into barrier (9)
24 It's right that Hindu god of love holds believer's destiny (5)
25 Timid slash lets in yorker (8)
26 You finally note conclusion and relax (6)

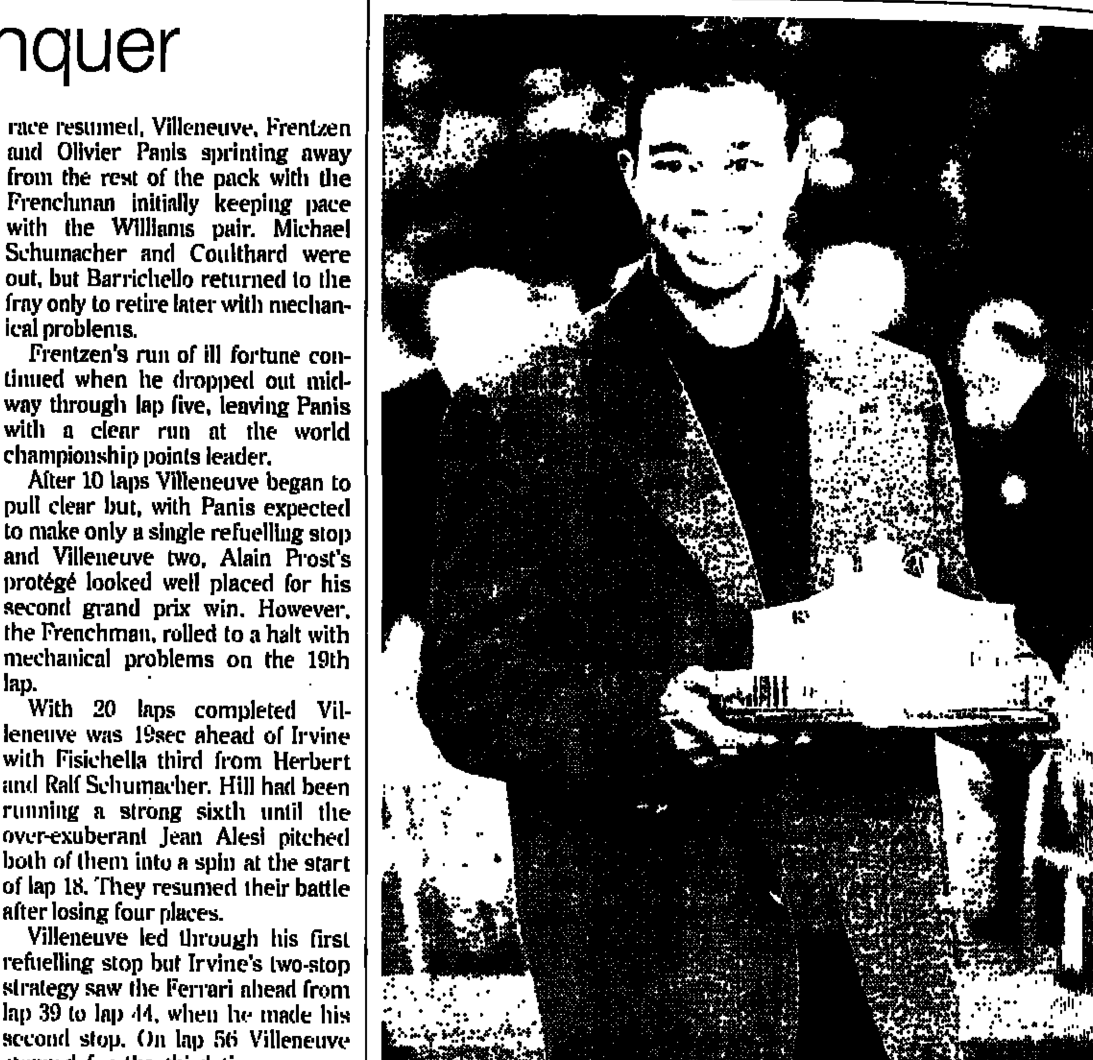
Down

1 Birds will be seen on Yorks river without a shadow of doubt (8)
2 Pithy sayings — not amateur words (8)
3 Mythological being participates in more adventures (5)
5 An insolent rep, ridiculously hostile to people (13)
6 Stand fast always when beset by unruly peers (9)
7 Suffers at home with vicious dogs (6)
8 Bob, 16th century inspector (6)
10 Agree how, in age, strange pattern looks like recurring (4,2,2,5)
14 Like some drawings that could produce eroticism (9)
15 Wine thus to go sour, they say (8)
16 In speech Principal prohibited hair adornment (8)
18 I provide the booze — brother must have jug (6)
19 Attend the thing or abscond? (4,2)
22 Sign X: "Without approval" (5)

Last week's solution

		S	A	F	E	B	R	E	A	K	E	R		
C		T		I		E		A		N		U		P
L	E	A	R	N	E	D		G	L	E	E	F	U	L
A		N		A		E		E		E		F		A
R	E	D	E	L	I	V	E	R		D	A	L	L	Y
E		O				I		L		E		E		E
T	I	N	E		P	L	A	Y	L	E	A	D	E	R
		O		D						P		F		
W	I	N	D	O	W	S	I	L	L		S	E	A	M
H		E		M		H		A				A		A
I	S	S	U	E		E	S	C	A	L	A	T	O	R
M		T		S		B		O		A		H		T
S	C	O	T	T	I	E		N	U	R	S	E	R	Y
Y		E		I		E		I		V		R		R
		S	E	C	O	N	D	C	L	A	S	S		

Golf US Masters


Prize guy . . . Tiger Woods after his stunning triumph PHOTO: MIKE BLAKE

Tiger burns bright as golf's youngest Master

Richard Williams in Augusta, Georgia

BREAKING records from tee to green, and with only the merest hint of nerves as he scattered the crowd with a wild shot from the 18th tee, the 21-year-old American golfer Eldrick "Tiger" Woods became the youngest man to win the US Masters last Sunday, in the first major championship of his professional career.

With a four-round score of 270 strokes, 18 under par, he beat the tournament record, jointly held by Jack Nicklaus and Raymond Floyd, by one stroke, and finished a record 12 strokes ahead of his nearest challenger. Woods inspired awestruck responses from his rivals and backed up predictions that he will dominate his sport for years to come.

He won a first prize of $480,000, to add to the contracts worth about $64 million that he signed when he turned professional last year after a record-breaking career as an amateur. He had already broken the record for the fastest man to reach a million dollars in prize money.

Woods, whose ancestry includes African-American, Thai, Chinese and Caucasian bloodlines, triumphed in a tournament in which no black golfer played until 1975. He has said that he intends to use his success to encourage minorities to play golf.

Woods was given his first golf club before he could walk. His father, a former GI who served in Vietnam and later worked in California for an aerospace company, coached him from infancy. He appeared on national television at the age of three, having beaten children of 10 and 11 to win his first competition, a pitch-and-putt. His level-headedness, said to be inherited from his Thai mother, ensured that his childhood promise would not be wasted.

After a slow start in the first round on Thursday last week, Woods's challenge to the established stars quickly gathered pace, and by the end of the second day he was in the lead.

Last Saturday he pulverised the opposition. This time last year Jack Nicklaus, a six-time Masters champion, predicted that Woods might win the tournament more times than himself and Arnold Palmer, a quadruple champion, put together. As Woods completed an event that seemed more like a coronation than a competition, that appeared to be an understatement.

American journalists were not frightened to tempt fate by asking Woods what victory in the Masters would mean to him. Woods replied: "In my estimation it's going to open up a lot of doors, a lot of opportunities . . . I think on this kind of stage and kind of media [attention] it's going to do a lot for the game as far as minority golf is concerned."

 Published by Guardian Publications Ltd., 164 Deansgate, Manchester, M60 2RR, and printed by WCP Commercial Printing, Leek.
Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and mailing offices. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.

The Guardian Weekly

Vol 156, No 17
Week ending April 27, 1997

The Washington Post · Le Monde

Israel in crisis over 'tainted' prime minister

Shyam Bhatia in Jerusalem

THE Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, promised on Monday to set up a committee to oversee government appointments in an attempt to keep his coalition intact by minimising the fallout from an influence-peddling scandal over a cabinet appointment.

Opposition leaders demanded his resignation and asked the supreme court to overrule the decision by prosecutors last Sunday not to indict him. The court will hear the motions early next month.

The attorney-general, Elyakim Rubinstein, ruled out criminal charges against Mr Netanyahu for lack of evidence, but said the prime minister's conduct was "bewildering" and "puzzling". Police had recommended that the prime minister be indicted for fraud and breach of trust.

Mr Rubinstein said police evidence did suggest that Mr Netanyahu might have appointed Roni Bar-On as attorney-general earlier this year to assist a coalition ally, the Shas party leader Rabbi Aryeh Deri, who faces a corruption trial.

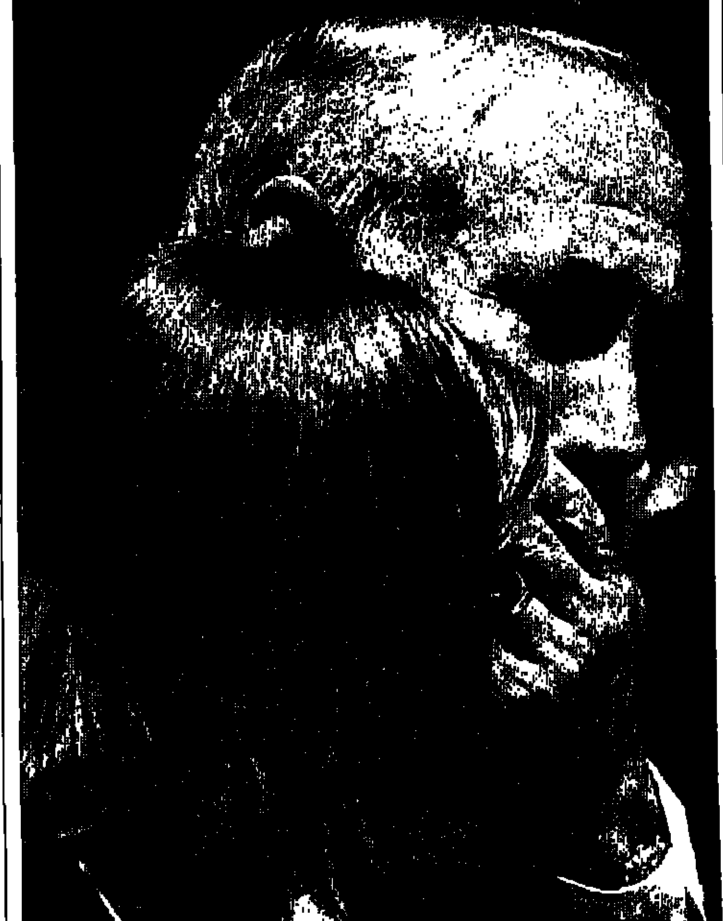
Mr Netanyahu's actions "raised puzzling questions", Mr Rubinstein said, although "the decision is to close [the case] for lack of sufficient evidence". He said evidence suggested "suspicion that there were other [than legitimate] considerations" in the appointment. "But we don't think this can be proved beyond a reasonable doubt."

Mr Netanyahu admitted that the affair had damaged him. Ehud Barak, the leading candidate to take over as leader of the opposition Labour party this summer, said: "Every honest person must ask himself if he accepts the moral authority of a man who is not on trial only because . . . there is insufficient evidence."

The Labour leader, Shimon Peres, called on Mr Netanyahu to quit. "There is enough evidence to bring the prime minister before the court of public opinion," he said. "It is unimaginable that [he] should continue . . . What we need now are new elections."

In a TV broadcast immediately after the attorney-general's announcement, Mr Netanyahu accused his enemies of conspiring to topple his government. "The bottom line is this: I committed no crime, and the attorney-general confirmed this," he said. "Some of my political rivals and some journalists . . . had decided to act against the people's will and change this government, but not through the ballot."

Washington Post, page 19


Netanyahu and his wife Sarah attend the funeral of former president Chaim Herzog last week. *Obituary, page 28* PHOTO: NATI HARNIK

Chirac calls snap poll over Europe

Paul Webster in Paris

PRESIDENT Jacques Chirac of France called a surprise early general election on May 25, and made Europe and the single currency the central issues.

The date was set in a short broadcast on Monday night. Mr Chirac said he had brought forward the poll by more than nine months so that the French people could "express themselves clearly on the scale and speed of change over the next five years". He said that the euro had to be accepted quickly "if we want to affirm ourselves as a great economic and political power, equal to the dollar and the yen".

In effect, the president called for a vote of confidence in himself two years after his election. He went on to imply that a key secondary question will be a challenge to the National Front's racist platform.

The detailed programme of the government — an alliance between the Gaullist RPR and the centrist Union for French Democracy — was due to be revealed on Tuesday by the prime minister, Alain Juppé, whose own post will depend on the outcome of the general election.

Before Mr Chirac spoke on television and radio, opinion polls showed that the government could lose at least 150 seats. At present, the Gaullist RPR and centrist coalition hold more than 480 of the 577 national assembly seats.

During his 1995 campaign, Mr Chirac said that early dissolution of parliament would only be justified in a crisis, but on Monday he asked the electorate for their clear support for a series of unspecified measures to strengthen the economy, improve social conditions and give him more power to negotiate on Europe.

The decision, taken after two weeks of political consultations, reflects fears that France will have to introduce severe and unpopular budgetary restrictions to meet the Maastricht criteria.

Mr Chirac's aides told him that a punitive budget would have to be introduced later this year if France's ambition to be a founder monetary union member was to be achieved. They also warned that the reforms could be so stringent that the government could not be sure of parliament's support.

Opposition parties, led by the secretary of the Socialist party, Lionel Jospin, said that the appeal for a vote of confidence was an admission of failure.

Europe took up most of Mr Chirac's 10-minute announcement. He reminded the electorate that Europe had brought 50 years of peace and continued to offer prosperity and security. Voters now had to consider the advantages of a single currency, the enlargement of Europe and a more important role in Nato.

His second theme, implicitly addressed to the National Front, was a call to the French people to restore republican moral values and increase respect and solidarity with others. He condemned the exploitation of fear and ignorance and the creation of scapegoats, but did not specifically mention the Front's anti-immigration policies.

Jean-Marie Le Pen's extremist movement, best known for its racist programme, has an unambiguous nationalist platform admired by a large section of traditional Gaullists.

Among Mr Chirac's subsidiary reasons for calling the election is an attempt to curtail the Front's popularity. But making Europe a central issue will be like throwing a piece of red meat to a lion in the hope that it will choke on it.

Most parties paid little attention when speculation about a dissolution began earlier this month, but the Front, after its recent success in the municipal election in Vitrolles, prepared for a snap national poll.

The mutual contempt that Mr Chirac and Mr Le Pen display publicly will be an added ingredient in an already complex election.

The Front leader means to make this a personal affair, but has still not decided where he will stand in his attempt to become one of the predicted 20 Front MPs.

Opinion polls show that the movement should win at least 13 per cent of the poll, enough to give it roughly the same strength as in 1986, the last time it was represented in parliament in any numbers. But under France's two-round system, a Front candidate beaten into third place on the first vote could still stand in the second to spoil the chances of a pro-European opponent.

Comment, page 15

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 450	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Brussels chief gatecrashes UK election

Stephen Bates in Brussels and Michael White

JOHN MAJOR on Monday seized on an attack by the European Commission president against the "doom merchant" rhetoric of British Eurosceptics as proof that Brussels was hell-bent on federalism.

Jacques Santer plunged into the UK election debate with a blunt and scarcely coded warning to both Mr Major and Labour leader Tony Blair not to engage in a destructive bout of Euroscepticism about the European Union's future.

In his speech in Amsterdam Mr Santer attacked the "ghosts of defeat" for trying to stop the process of European integration. He mounted a vigorous defence of the EU's moves towards more majority voting and common policies — areas the Tories and Labour are pledged to oppose.

He asked: "Those who criticise, do they know what they are talking about? . . . Do these doom merchants want us to step backwards towards a Europe only composed of simple trading arrangements?

"No one can seriously suggest that we turn back the clock and deprive ourselves of the strength and advantages of belonging to the world's first economic power, especially as we witness the globalisation of our economies and the emergence of ever more numerous and strongly performing actors on increasingly open world markets."

Despite the damaging Euro split in Tory ranks during the election campaign, the Prime Minister seized on the intervention as an opportunity to hammer home what rightwing Conservatives insist is a vote-winning theme. Mr Major said: "Unlike the Labour leader, I will retain our vetoes. If it is right for Britain, I will keep my feet on the brakes. Mr Blair would . . . put his foot on the accelerator to a federal Europe. This is the clear choice on May 1. I repeat: if Europe goes federal, a Conservative British government would not follow."

By coincidence on Monday, Mr Blair was setting out Labour's Euro-stall with a five-point agenda, designed to complete the single market for strong British industries; to enlarge the EU to the east while reforming costly farm policy; promoting foreign policy; and tackling unemployment while creating flexible labour markets.

He warned of "formidable obstacles to Britain joining in the first wave" of the single currency, theoretically in 1999.

UK election, page 10

Clinton's silence over Gaza speaks volumes

DAVID HIRST, reporting from Gaza (Arafat in a quandary as his dream fades, April 6), was on target when he so keenly observed: "Washington [meaning Mr Clinton] rallied to the Israeli line. From Mr Arafat he now wants an unequivocal red light. What he wants, from Mr Netanyahu, he has yet to say ..." Mr Clinton does not have to say anything: his obsequious silence is eloquent enough.

The notion that Mr Netanyahu and by extension Mr Clinton, by their reckless actions and behaviour, can repeatedly humiliate the Palestinians without any violent response by them is the height of sheer arrogance, if not stupidity.

History reminds us that fanatical leaders, no matter how well-intentioned, are incapable of making peace. Mr Netanyahu is a vivid example of that.

As for President Clinton, his inability to deal impartially with the Arab-Israeli débâcle, shows us how dangerously vulnerable American democracy has become to the exertions of a politically powerful ethnic minority.
Haig Allahverdian,
Chicago, USA

IAN BLACK'S article (Israel sees safety put on the line, March 30) is a black mark in the Guardian's usually balanced reporting of the Middle East situation.

Mr Black writes of suicide bombings "that killed 60 Israelis last year". This fact is undeniable — but there is no mention of the numbers of Palestinians killed or injured daily in Israeli prisons and by the Israeli army, border police and settlers. Why are Palestinian deaths and injuries not an "atrocity" on the same level as Israeli deaths and injuries?

Mr Black writes that "the structure of [the Israeli] occupation helped maintain control", with no understanding that such control through "licences and permits" denies that most basic of human rights — the right to an identity, to a nationality, to autonomy.

He mentions Yasser Arafat's meeting with Hamas and Islamic Jihad leaders prior to the recent bombings. Where is the analysis of that meeting?

The photograph and caption accompanying the article were also disturbing. The Palestinians are negatively described as being "armed", contributing to the stereotypical images of Palestinians as being "violent" and "terrorists". But what are they armed with: slingshots and stones against loaded rifles. Stones can never compete with live ammunition or even "rubber bullets" — lead pellets with the barest of rubber coatings that can kill.
Lisa Arnold,
Sydney, Australia

PERHAPS if they hadn't stretched their "lines" beyond the 55 per cent of Mandate Palestine allotted them by the United Nations to some 90 per cent of Palestine today, plus occupied chunks of Lebanon and Syria, everybody might have some "safety" today.

But, as Ahad Haam, watching the attitude of the original Zionist colonists toward the Arabs, said: "Our brothers have learned nothing from history." A century later and they still have not learned.
Miriam M Abileah,
Toronto, Canada

Unholy alliance in Burma

THE Guardian Weekly gave details of the Burma army's campaign to eliminate indigenous minorities, ostensibly to create nature reserves (Save the rhino but kill the people, March 30). I write to express my strong revulsion to the collaboration by the Smithsonian Institute, Wildlife Conservation Society and, somewhat tempered, the World Wildlife Fund. It sadly reflects a quote I read recently:

"Americans don't have any trouble throwing people overboard as long as they don't have to hear the splash."

Ignoring the 3,000 bodies in 1988, these organisations are collaborating with Burma's Orwellian Slorc, who killed and will ruthlessly kill again to achieve their dual purpose of expelling these minorities, while flaunting the benediction of those gullible enough to be deceived.

One is not surprised when commercial interests swallow their revulsion in pursuit of profit, but would hope for more from those with less mercenary principles. The Smithsonian, Wildlife Conservation Society and World Wildlife Fund are all reputable organisations who cannot emerge with clean hands from this association.

I trust a strong show of public revulsion will reveal to these collaborating organisations what bad judgment they are displaying and persuade them to withdraw their sponsorship of this regime.
Basil Seaton,
Jasper, Alberta, Canada

A SPOKESMAN for the Smithsonian Institution states in your March 30 edition that it is not his organisation's role to challenge the Burmese military regime when it rapes, enslaves and murders members of the Karen ethnic group. Is this not an ironic position for the self-proclaimed repository of civilisation to take? Perhaps its role is nearing an end.
Lynn Shervill,
Smithers, BC, Canada

Life-and-death decisions

I FULLY endorse your call for a national commission "to clarify the conflicting moral and clinical issues" concerning all medical decisions at the end of life (Death and a moral minefield, April 6).

Your suggestion would also find favour with the vast majority of the public (82 per cent, according to the British Social Attitudes Survey, 1996) and an increasing number of doctors (46 per cent, according to the BMA News Review Survey, 1996) who support a change in the law to permit voluntary euthanasia in well-defined circumstances.

However, the commission's conclusions will be worthless unless it takes steps to discover existing medical practice. This was a glaring omission by the House of Lords Select Committee on Medical Ethics when it reported on this matter in 1994.

There now needs to be a large-scale survey of current practice, granting doctors immunity from prosecution where appropriate, and an agreement on necessary safeguards.
(Sir) Ludovic Kennedy,
Voluntary Euthanasia Society, London

YOUR editorial perpetuates misunderstanding of the so-called condition "persistent vegetative state" (PVS).

PVS is not a disease, or even a diagnostic entity. It is a syndrome, a description of behavioural response. Many patients can be described as being in a "persistent vegetative state" . . . victims of head injury, drowning, stroke, encephalitis, etc. Jean-Dominique Bauby was apparently among them.

To date, doctors have been unable to agree upon an acceptable, clinical definition for PVS. Neurodiagnostic tests can neither confirm the diagnosis of PVS, nor predict the potential for recovery. Many doctors say that, in fact, PVS does not exist.

At the moment, to say that someone is in a "persistent vegetative state" is clinically meaningless.

But to go on to suggest that PVS is an irreversible diagnostic entity that arguably justifies the termination of someone's life is, to my mind, medically unwarranted, ethically indefensible and editorially irresponsible.
Gail Graham,
Queens Park, NSW, Australia

Throwing the book at Canada

AS EDITOR of Storyteller, Canada's short story magazine, I take exception to Alexander Frater's "conventional belief that it's well-nigh impossible to write entertainingly about Canada" (Making fine fiction of Canada's history, April 13).

Any regular reader of Storyteller does not share this belief. Our annual Great Canadian Story Contest issue abundantly demonstrates that Mr Frater has expressed an opinion which can be shared only by those who never read Canadian popular fiction.

I can recommend, for their enlightenment, writers such as Charles De Lint, Eric Wright, Gail Bowen, Spider Robinson, Alison Gordon and Mordecai Richler.

There are dozens of other writers who, for the most part, will remain inaccessible to readers of Mr. Frater's "conventional" mind. That is, they are probably too Canadian for them to understand. Pity. They're missing out on a lot of fun.
Melanie Fogel,
Ottawa, Canada

I SUBSCRIBE to the Guardian Weekly because I appreciate its "window on the wider world" of global issues. However, as a Canadian, I am frequently offended by its writers' condescending and ignorant accounts of Canadian issues.

Now we see this insulting review of a travel book on Canada that Alexander Frater deigned to read. Perhaps a little information about the country would help.

For example, he tells us that "little forest remained" to be seen by the travellers. Little forest? Badly as our logging companies abuse it, Canada has today roughly 453 million hectares of forest lands, comprising vast areas which support diverse ecosystems of immense beauty.

Could we please have some writing about Canada in the Guardian Weekly that is not characterised by ignorance and lingering colonialist snobbery?
Michelle Swenarchuk,
Toronto, Canada

Briefly

I AM annoyed to find increasing media coverage of the Year 2000 computer problem, featuring "experts" who have just "discovered" it. (Headed for millennium meltdown, March 23).

I described this serious problem — and its solution — in The Ghost From The Grand Banks (Gollancz, 1990).

As it appears that the cost of upgrading computer codes could run to trillions of dollars, I have half-seriously suggested that we should forget all about the computers, and simply change the calendar — which people have been trying to do for centuries, anyway! It might be a good excuse for its belated rationalisation . . .
(Dr) Arthur C Clarke,
Colombo, Sri Lanka

CONTRARY to Chris McGreal's analysis (Zaire dying slowly with its leader March 30), Zaire is experiencing new birth. The country has been dying while the president was very much alive. Mobutu dismembered it by his policies of divide-and-rule and of neglect.

Now in the east of the country, after only four months of rule by the ADLF forces, Zaireans are optimistic about the future. The banks are functioning, the currency stabilising. The deplorable roads are being improved. The constant harassment by societies and officials has ceased. Taxes have been reduced and regulated.

The worst thing Kabila can do is to negotiate with the old regime, which is indeed moribund and utterly corrupt.
Emma Wild,
Mukono, Uganda

IF THE reorganisation of the UN Security Council (UN unveils plans for reform, March 30) comes about, it will contain three members of the European Union (France, Germany and the UK) instead of the current two, France and the UK. What will happen if the EU develops into a single political entity, following the adoption of a single currency? Will it not then be limited to a single vote, as the USA is? Which of the three permanent members will then represent the EU? Is this point being addressed in the review of the Maastricht treaty, due to result in the signing of a new treaty in Amsterdam at the end of June?
Margaret Webb,
Nyons, France

IT IS a pity that the campaigners against hunting do not devote equal energy to attacking the factory farmers. Their form of cruelty is inflicted on many more animals and is a greater obscenity than hunting because its motivation is profit.
William Cookson,
Editor, Agenda, London

The Guardian Weekly
April 27, 1997 Vol 156 No 17

Annual subscription rates are £49 United Kingdom; £55 Europe inc. Eire, USA and Canada; £63 Rest of World.
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Islam's holy pilgrims die in Saudi blaze

Kathy Evans and agencies

MORE than 300 people were burned alive or trampled to death as fire surged through an encampment of Muslim pilgrims outside the holy city of Mecca last week.

The pilgrims were among 2 million people taking part in the Hajj — a sacred ritual pilgrimage to Islam's holiest shrine, in Saudi Arabia.

Many of the dead were incinerated by gusts of flame, while others were trampled to death during a terrible stampede as people tried to flee. The fire left hundreds of thousands stranded, strewn out across the plains of Mena, outside Mecca, after up to 70,000 tents were burned.

In the town of Mena, 10km from Mecca, Saudi firemen raked through the ruins of the tent city, which was engulfed in flames after a cooking-gas cylinder exploded.

So far, few of the 343 dead have been identified, but most are thought to be Asian. Nearly 1,500 were injured and many are recovering in Mecca's al-Nour hospital. The toll is expected to rise further as many of the injured are in a serious condition.

Many of the dead, who included the poorest pilgrims on the Hajj, would have spent their life-savings going to Mecca. "Most of our pilgrims come from the poorest and most primitive countries, and the majority are in their 60s and older. They simply could not run to escape the fire," said an official commentator.

The tragedy, the fifth to strike the Hajj since 1980, has already revived talk among Saudis on the need to cut back the quotas allowed from each Muslim country on the annual pilgrimage.

Under a formula devised at an Islamic Conference summit in 1988, Saudi Arabia currently allows 1,000 pilgrims per million of population. With prosperity rising in Muslim countries and the Islamic revival, demand has grown rapidly. Islam obliges able-bodied Muslims to make the pilgrimage at least once in their lifetimes.

Yet, despite $16 billion spent in the past 10 years on pilgrim facilities and the holy shrines, the strain of coping with a sudden influx of more than a million people has proved hard even for the wealthy oil kingdom.



An Indian woman waits outside the New Delhi hajj committee office last week for news of her brother PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MOORE

Mobutu stalls on Zaire peace talks

Matthew Bigg in Lula and agencies

PRESIDENT Mobutu Sese Seko will not travel to South Africa this week for planned talks with rebel leader Laurent Kabila on ending Zaire's civil war, his son and spokesman said on Monday.

"Apparently President Mobutu doesn't want to travel to South Africa. He prefers somewhere else," Nzanga Mobutu said. "It's a long flight and he's still convalescing."

Asked if Mr Mobutu would prefer to go to Brazzaville, capital of neighbouring Congo across the river from Kinshasa, Nzanga said: "From what I've heard Kabila doesn't want to go to Brazzaville." He said, however, that the talks were not off and that negotiators from both sides were still working on a date and venue.

Mr Mobutu reluctantly agreed to meet Mr Kabila, who demanded direct talks as a condition for ending his six-month-old armed campaign to topple the long-serving president.

Mr Kabila's forces have seized more than half of Zaire's vast territory and are threatening to bring the war to the capital, Kinshasa, if the president does not agree to step down at their planned meeting. Mr Mobutu wants the talks to set the stage for elections.

In Lubumbashi, rebels denounced Western pressure on them to compromise with the Mobutu regime. The rebels' choice for finance minister, Mwana Nanga Mawanpanga, reading a statement from Mr Kabila, said the rebel leader would resist all pressure to compromise with Mr Mobutu, and rebel fighters would now regard any foreign soldiers on Zairean soil as a target.

The rebels claimed that 400 Chinese troops had flown into Kinshasa to bolster Mr Mobutu's regime. However, a foreign ministry spokesman in Beijing denied the claim.

Mr Mawanpanga declined to say which Western powers were pressing Mr Kabila to compromise with Mr Mobutu, but he stressed that the alliance would not stop its offensive to take Kinshasa until the president signed his resignation.

Meanwhile Zaireans armed with knives and machetes looted aid supplies in eastern Zaire on Monday after refugees killed six villagers. They said they looted aid convoys — which they claimed were carrying arms for Rwandan Hutus in bags of maize — at the urging of the Tutsi-dominated rebels. They would deny access to all aid workers, they added.

At the scene of looting near Lula, 6km south of Kisangani, a young man said: "The liberators [rebels] sent us here to pillage things going to the refugees. When we got back, they [the rebels] took the things from us."

Residents said Hutu refugees from the 32,000-strong Kasese camp had attacked a nearby village before dawn and killed at least six people. After the killings, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, said a rebel operation near Kasese camp, 25km south of Kisangani, raised fears of a new refugee exodus.

Aid workers said they feared that looters were acting with encouragement from the rebels, who deny any role in the incidents.

In Kinshasa, Zaire's information minister told foreign journalists they needed extra permission to report on the war. Kin-Kiey Mulumba said the reporters had to seek new accreditation and that an "ethics committee" would be set up to monitor reporting of the war.

France, which is distancing itself from Mr Mobutu, hinted on Monday that it might talk to Mr Kabila. —*Reuter*

India swears in new PM

Suzanne Goldenberg in New Delhi

INDIA'S president invited a politician regarded as a peacemaker with Pakistan to form the next government, a decision which it is hoped will bring an end to weeks of political machinations.

Inder Kumar Gujral, who won popular acclaim as foreign minister in the 10-month United Front government for his conciliatory approach to Islamabad, was sworn in on Monday. But the signs are that his government will be hamstrung and short-lived.

A sceptical President Shankar Dayal Sharma gave his nod to Mr Gujral's United Front — a disparate collection of regional and leftwing parties — only after receiving assurances that his would be a viable administration.

His anxiety compelled the alliance to agree to a co-ordinating council between the government and the Congress party, whose withdrawal of support earlier this month precipitated the crisis.

Although the council's remit is uncertain, it is meant to iron out differences between the government and its supporters before they erupt into the sort of crisis that brought down the government of H D Deve Gowda, which lost a confidence motion on April 11. The president had demanded a guarantee from the Congress leader, Sitaram Kesri, that Mr Gujral, a member of the left-leaning Janata Dal, will not soon meet the same fate.

As foreign minister in Mr Deve Gowda's government, Mr Gujral, aged 76 and a native of Lahore, now part of Pakistan, restarted a dialogue with Islamabad that had been frozen for three years. He also mended fences with Bangladesh and Nepal.

But the acclaim that might normally be expected at his selection has been muted. The Front's long deliberation in the search for a successor to Mr Gowda who would also be acceptable to the Congress has highlighted the divisions in the 13-party alliance.

One of its larger members, the Tamil Maanila Congress, decamped last weekend after its leader failed to be selected as prime minister. Though the TMC will support the Front government, its loss as a coalition member is especially damaging. It held the finance portfolio and its minister, P Chidambaram, was popular in the business community and among foreign investors for his support of economic liberalisation.

Chinese army advance guard enters HK

Andrew Higgins in Hong Kong

BESIDE a traffic "give way" sign, the commander of Britain's shrinking Hong Kong garrison saluted an unarmed advance guard of the Chinese army on Monday, and surrendered a freshly painted wing of the Prince of Wales Barracks to a force still stained by the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre.

Only the traffic put up any resistance to the convoy of two black Audis, two white mini-vans and three camouflaged military trucks carrying 40 soldiers of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) into the heart of Hong Kong's business district to survey China's future domain.

Property the PLA will inherit when Britain pulls out its last troops at midnight on June 30 includes the world's most valuable swimming pool — on land worth $5 million — tennis courts and the bones of assorted British dogs.

"You can't stop them coming. That is the agreement. We have to learn to live with them," said Wu Sai-chong, a housewife watching the Chinese arrival. "Every big tree has some sour fruit. The PLA is the same. But let's hope they send the good ones here."

Until the handover, the Chinese advance party must share the barracks with tattooed soldiers of the Black Watch, a Scottish regiment that last won battle honours fighting Chinese troops during the Korean War.

Anxious to reassure a colony traumatised by the Tiananmen killings, the Chinese soldiers waved and smiled during their journey into town.

"They are subject to our laws and are conducting themselves, I think, in a sensible, low-profile way," said the governor, Chris Patten.

Hong Kong television carried live coverage of their progress under police motorcycle escort from the border crossing at Lok Ma Chau.

Before leaving China the soldiers, members of an élite unit called the Red First Regiment, were lectured by their Communist party political commissar. Chinese state television showed a formal send-off parade with guns. The weapons were left behind when they crossed into Hong Kong.

Shortly before, the Royal Navy fired a 21-gun salute to mark the Queen's birthday, the last time the occasion will be celebrated in Hong Kong.

Only congestion in the tunnel under Victoria Harbour slowed the arrival of China's first troops in Hong Kong since Royal Navy gunboats seized the island for Queen Victoria in 1841. China will take over 14 bases to house up to 10,000 armed Chinese troops expected on July 1.

"This is a historic moment for both British and Chinese armed forces," said Major-General Bryan Dutton, commander of British forces. "We hope their relationship with the local community will be as constructive and rewarding as ours has been."

British troops are notorious for bar brawls in Wan Chai, but inspire little of the unease caused by the Chinese military, seen by many in Hong Kong as brutal and corrupt.

Michelle Cheung, a secretary whose office overlooks the barracks, said: "On the surface they seem to have changed. Let's wait and see how they act after the handover. Whether they are good or bad, this is what we are all waiting to see."

British troops have been briefed on Chinese military ranks so they know whom to salute.

John Gittings, page 14
Le Monde, page 18

The Week

THE UNION of Democratic Forces won a big parliamentary majority in Bulgaria's elections. They have called on support from other parties to seek support for crisis measures.

TOP cigarette executives in the United States have started secret negotiations on an agreement that could cost the industry $300 billion over the next 25 years.

Washington Post, page 20

A HELICOPTER crew spotted fragments of metal on Colorado's New York mountain which the US air force thinks may be part of the wreckage of the warplane that mysteriously went missing this month.

ZIMBABWEAN cabinet members are accused of looting a huge fund meant to compensate independence war veterans, a scandal that has come to a head just as the country marks its 17th anniversary of independence.

INTERNATIONAL scientists are investigating the worst recorded outbreak of the highly contagious Lassa fever virus, which has claimed 23 lives and infected more than 150 others in eastern Sierra Leone since the beginning of March.

THE Irish Republic's opposition Fianna Fail party was mired in controversy when supermarket chief Ben Dunne admitted he had secretly given the former prime minister, Charles Haughey, $2.2 million.

IRAQI helicopters arrived at the border with Saudi Arabia to pick up Muslim pilgrims, the official Iraqi News Agency said, in defiance of a US warning not to breach the no-fly zone.

FOR the first time in Iranian history a woman, Azam Taleqani, has announced her candidacy for the presidency.

CHINA won a telling strategic victory in Geneva, brushing aside a divided West to avoid censure of its human rights record.

JAPAN'S state-run Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development Corporation admitted that it had failed to report 11 minor radioactive leaks at a reactor west of Tokyo.

PRESIDENT Clinton has approved imposing economic sanctions against Burma because of human rights abuses by Rangoon's military government.

THE ashes of Timothy Leary, the 1960s drugs guru, Gene Roddenberry, creator of Star Trek, and Gerard O'Neill, the US seer who believed that by 1997 humans would live in space, were sent into space on board Spain's first scientific satellite.

Children pay price for democracy

Ian Traynor in Bonn

THE children of eastern Europe are among the main losers of the upheaval and revolutionary change of the 1990s, according to a Unicef report published on Monday.

The 170-page document from the United Nations children's organisation on the plight of children in the former Soviet Union, central Europe, and the Balkans, painted a distressing picture of rampant poverty, family breakdown and sexual abuse, alongside rising juvenile crime, murder and suicide rates, and the reappearance of tuberculosis and diphtheria.

The disintegration of the Soviet system generated "great hopes that the needs of children would be better met in the short term", the report said. "These hopes have been largely betrayed."

Throughout the region there were more children living in care in 1995 (about 1 million) than in 1990, when the disclosure of the wretched conditions in Romanian orphanages shocked the West.

John Donohue, the Unicef official responsible for eastern Europe, said the children institutionalised in homes and orphanages were "ensnared in a trap".

"In many ways the children are worse off [than under communism] and this is a scandal," said Gaspar Fajth, the report's co-author.

In central Europe, the number of children living in poverty has more than doubled in the nineties to 2.5 million, while in the 18 countries surveyed 8 million people had been displaced by war and ethnic conflict since 1989.

"Nowhere is the gulf between economic progress and social impoverishment clearer than in the worsening position of . . . children in public care," according to the report. "In countries like Moldova, Georgia or Armenia, the public child protection system has virtually collapsed."

The number of infants, aged up to three, being placed in homes has soared by 75 per cent in Estonia, and by about 40 per cent in Latvia, Romania, and Russia.

The social dislocation caused by the radical changes that have taken place since 1989 has had a dramatic impact on traditional patterns of family life. Marriage rates have fallen sharply and the divorce rate has soared.

In Russia, the report said, one in three children of divorced parents "never see their father again and only 4 per cent of divorced fathers maintain a regular relationship with their children".

In Estonia, 44 per cent of births in 1995 were to single mothers, while in Russia, Bulgaria and Moldova, one in five babies born in 1995 was to teenage mothers.

Juvenile crime, depression, and abuse of children by adults are rising inexorably. The teenage male murder rates rose more than fivefold between 1989 and 1995 in Lithuania, and male teenage suicide rates in the same period almost doubled in Belarus.

Polish social workers believe half the prostitutes on the Polish-German border are under 18, while 11- and 12-year-old prostitutes work in Lithuanian hotels.

The report said: "The region is increasingly portrayed . . . as a sex paradise where customers can easily obtain children."



The first Guatemalan rebels to demobilise at the end of the country's 36-year civil war wave goodbye to their former comrades in arms as they leave a United Nations camp at Escuintla PHOTOGRAPH: SCOTT SADY

Defector arrives in Seoul

Agencies in Seoul, Washington and Manila

THE highest-ranking official ever to flee North Korea arrived in South Korea last weekend, declaring he was defecting because he and others had lost hope in a regime unable to feed its people.

Hwang Jang-yop, one of the architects of Pyongyang's isolationist policy of *juche* (self-reliance), arrived at a military airport near Seoul after a 67-day odyssey via Beijing and the Philippines.

He said in a statement that the North's economy was sliding into "paralysis" and the leadership was considering war as a diversion.

"North Korea has now turned into an international beggar," he said, and added that the people had "long since lost all hope" in the regime. "North Korea now seems to believe that as the only way out it must use its formidable armed forces."

The United States said that it planned to interview him to find out about Pyongyang's plans for war.

"It is one of the most dangerous flashpoints in the world," the US defence secretary, William Cohen, said. He said Seoul had agreed to give the US a chance to interrogate Mr Hwang.

Mr Hwang arrived in Seoul from the Philippines, where officials said he had told them that he regretted the mistakes he had made while serving the Pyongyang regime, and planned to spend the rest of his life rectifying them.

A senior official said North Korea had agreed not to oppose Mr Hwang's journey to Seoul in return for food aid. "That was the clincher," he said.

Meanwhile talks in New York aimed at persuading North Korea to join peace negotiations appeared to be near collapse as Pyongyang continued to demand more time to consider the US-South Korean offer.

Albanian hospital caught in line of fire

Julian Borger in Shkoder

THE surgeons at Shkoder hospital had just finished patching up a man with multiple bullet wounds and were pulling off their gloves when a visitor appeared at the door of the operating theatre, asking about the patient's condition.

The doctors smiled. It had been touch and go but he would survive, they announced. At this point, the visitor pulled out a gun and fired several more rounds into the anaesthetised body, extinguishing the life the doctors had just fought to save.

The besieged medics in this impoverished northern town are struggling to fend off the chaos lapping at the gates of their crumbling hospital. The littered streets beyond belong to rival gangs, which have been heavily armed since military stores were broken into on March 12, at the height of the turmoil surrounding the failure of Albania's get-rich-quick savings schemes.

In Shkoder most of the violence appears criminal rather than political, although a couple of the eight big gangs in town have loose affiliations with the ruling Democratic party while others are close to the opposition Socialists.

Arms trafficking has been hit by the end of the Bosnian conflict. The focus has recently shifted to drug running and highway robbery. The roads from Shkoder into the surrounding highlands are infested with bandits.

The gangs have no qualms about taking their battles into the hospital, where doctors often find themselves performing surgery at gunpoint. On April 10 one of the surgeons, Zamir Shazi, was shot and killed by a man he had never seen before. It emerged that Dr Shazi had been unable to resuscitate his assailant's mortally wounded brother five years earlier, and the present gun-fest suddenly provided the means to exact vengeance.

"Doctors are easy targets. They don't keep vendettas," said Arben Zajmi, a Shkoder journalist.

This month, when a gunshot victim died at the hospital, his relatives, driven wild by grief and looking for someone to blame, invaded the wards and opened fire wildly at the walls of the hospital corridor.

"If you have men who are armed, without a minimum of human logic, it's dangerous. We are always under pressure," said Dr Pjerin Lazri.

In the past 10 weeks, 50 Shkoder residents have been killed and 300 wounded, mainly by gunshots. The doctors have been working without a break.

The hospital — which lacks several doors and windows, as well as antibiotics and surgical equipment — is a magnet for Shkoder's gunmen and gangsters, who follow the trail of blood to its doors.

On Sunday a minivan pulled up in the courtyard. It disgorged two men dragging a third bleeding profusely from the stump of his right arm. He was a 23-year-old shepherd from an outlying village who had picked up a landmine. "He didn't know what it was. He just found it and tried to open it," said a cousin who brought him in. "It must have been dropped as everyone went past. They had their arms full with mines, grenades everything. It's stupidity. In the village, everyone has weapons."

His relatives began to gather outside the operating theatre. One had his hand Napoleon-style inside his leather jacket, from where the flash of gun metal was visible.

"Every time we come out of theatre for something, they try to force us to work faster," one of the para-medics complained.

Dr Lazri returned to Albania only four months ago after studying medicine in Germany, with high hopes of improving the standard of Shkoder's medical care. Those aspirations have been shelved. The challenge now is to keep going through endless late-night shifts.

Washington Post, page 19

CIA and FBI reputation in tatters

Alex Duval Smith in Washington

THE credibility of the CIA and FBI hit a new low last week after damaging allegations culminated in the FBI being officially branded "derelict" in its handling of the country's biggest spy scandal.

Leaked findings from a justice department investigation into the case of Aldrich Ames — a CIA official who spied for the KGB — showed that Ames was left to rise unhindered through the agency's ranks while accumulating more than $2 million in payments from the Soviet Union. Ames was sentenced to life imprisonment following his arrest and confession in 1994. The report is so damaging it is expected never to be made fully public.

The Ames leak follows criticism of the FBI chief Louis Freeh's handling of the investigation. And it came days before the CIA's new head, George Tenet, faces congressional hearings to confirm his appointment. Earlier in the week, the agency faced renewed criticism for its handling of intelligence during the Gulf war — when Mr Tenet was its acting head.

General Colin Powell, who commanded United States forces during the 1991 conflict, told the Senate veterans' committee last week that when he ordered troops to blow up southern Iraqi ammunition dumps after the war, he had not received CIA warnings about chemical weapons.

This was a direct contradiction of Mr Tenet, who said the CIA knew that nerve gas was present in the Kamisiyah ammunitions dump and insisted that the US military's central command had been given a detailed briefing.

The Ames investigation says the FBI was "derelict" for not reacting when two Washington-based Soviet officials who had been recruited by the FBI were abruptly recalled to Moscow in 1985. The two, Valery Martinov and Sergei Mortorin, were executed.

The report, part of which was passed to the New York Times, said the loss of the agents should have alerted American intelligence to the fact that someone in the CIA had compromised them. Instead, between 1985 and 1994, Ames was left undisturbed to denounce to the KGB more than a dozen Eastern-bloc officials who were working for the US. The report claims that virtually the entire CIA spy network in the Soviet Union was wiped out as a result.

The FBI said last week that the report should not be seen as a reflection on the current relationship between the CIA and FBI. John Lewis, head of national security at the FBI, said: "Twenty-twenty hindsight is terrific in 1997 when you are looking back at the mid-1980s. But the state of our counter-intelligence and counter-espionage investigations are only as good as the relationship between the FBI and CIA.

"Back in the 1980s we did not have good co-operation. If there is one thing that did come out of the Ames case, we are co-operating more today than we have ever been."

Though Mr Freeh has attempted to reduce the rivalry between his agency and the CIA, he has recently come under fierce criticism on spending and for suppressing internal debate.

Earlier last week, the FBI crime laboratory, which has handled such cases as the World Trade Centre and Oklahoma City bombings, was accused in a separate justice department report of tampering with evidence.

Washington Post, page 19

Hun Sen makes play for power

Nick Cumming-Bruce in Phnom Penh

CAMBODIA is braced for trouble from an aggressive push by Hun Sen — head of the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and nominally the junior of the country's two prime ministers — to undermine the leadership of Prince Nordon Ranariddh, his supposedly senior co-prime minister, who leads the royalist Funcinpec party.

From a sprawling military complex on the outskirts of the capital where he lives protected by a private army of hundreds of troops, Mr Hun Sen claimed last weekend that 12 Funcinpec MPs had publicly turned against Prince Ranariddh and many more covertly back them.

Driving up to meet the press in a golf buggy draped with bodyguards, Mr Hun Sen pressed home the offensive, declaring he would offer the dissidents political and financial support and protection.

He denies engineering the schism, and his aides deride allegations by Funcinpec insiders that the second prime minister personally made telephone calls urging senior figures to join the rebels.

But in the Funcinpec headquarters, closely guarded by edgy troops, a member outlined the bribe he said he was offered to change allegiances. The voice on the telephone asked him: "Do you want a house? Do you want a car?"

Hun Sen aides also deny that either their leader or the CPP had anything to do with the grenade attack on March 30 that killed 19 people and injured 120, but failed to kill the opposition leader Sam Rainsy. Few people seem persuaded by the denials.

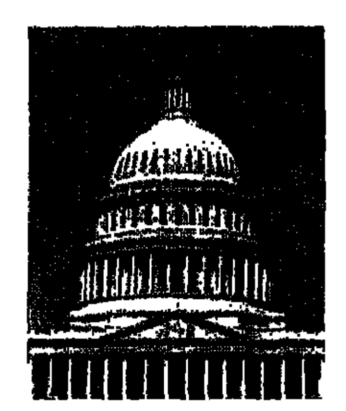
"He is not only a mass murderer," a senior diplomat in Phnom Penh says bluntly of Mr Hun Sen. "He is obsessed with power."

The coalition government spawned by a $2 billion United Nations effort to lay the foundations of peace and pluralist politics is tottering. As the rift between the prime ministers deepens, there is a growing fear that even after decades of civil war, only a spark is needed to ignite new conflict.

"Now I think it's time to worry," an MP said pensively after a night interrupted by anonymous and menacing phone calls. "It's a jungle, it's a cowboy country now. They can do any terrible thing they want."

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Beijing threatened by a holy alliance



The US this week

Martin Walker

OVER THE next month, American television viewers are going to become wretchedly familiar with a torture scene. The ad begins with a half-naked man of vaguely Asian appearance hanging by his wrists.

"No shirt. No shoes. No rights," runs the voice-over. "No sale. Human rights is also the business of America."

It is part of a concerted campaign. This week, a series of radio ads starts running on all the Christian and Gospel music networks as well as on top-rated radio talk shows.

"The sound of Chinese Christians singing their favourite hymns at an open church service," the voice begins. And then all you hear is silence, accentuated by a slight blowing wind.

"You know, you listen as hard as you want, but you won't hear the sound of freedom in China today. You see, it's illegal. In fact, the communist government imprisons and tortures and will even kill those who challenge it — or who believe religion should serve God and not socialism. So it's ironic that the Chinese government wants special trade privileges, complete with lower tariffs and American technology, from the very country that was founded on the freedom of speech and religion.

"Call your Congressman today to say NO to communist special trade privileges."

Humans rights organisations such as Amnesty International would probably give a lot to have the financial and marketing resources to run a campaign of this kind. And I doubt whether they could ever rival the organisational skills of the American religious right, which will be sending out more than 5 million mail shots to its most devout supporters, attacking China's appalling human rights record.

But this campaign is even more remarkable, because of the allies the religious right has acquired. I would have given long odds against the Christian Coalition making common cause with the AFL-CIO. The first is heart, soul and bulwark of the Republican right; the second is the labour union confederation, still the institutional heart of the Democratic party. But they are currently plotting a Mayday joint press conference to declare their opposition to any further Most Favoured Nation (MFN) trade status for China.

The trade unions, which have so far fought a losing battle against President Clinton's grand strategy of turning the US into the linchpin and guarantor of a free-trading global economy, are naturally delighted to have this kind of media and lobbying firepower on their side. The unions sound almost relieved to be able to deploy the rhetoric of freedom, rather than trade protection.

"One of the things the Chinese government is most afraid of is linkage between workers and religious believers on an organisational level," says Jeffrey Fiedler, president of the AFL-CIO's Food and Allied Service Trades division. "It's what they call the Polish disease. That's what unravelled eastern Europe."

This argument directly confronts Clinton's claim that trading and engaging with China will build a prosperous middle class that will inevitably claim political freedom. The fact is that, as his own state department's annual human rights report concludes, China has tightened its repression ever since Clinton, under intense corporate pressure, gave up his 1992 campaign promise to link trade to human rights.

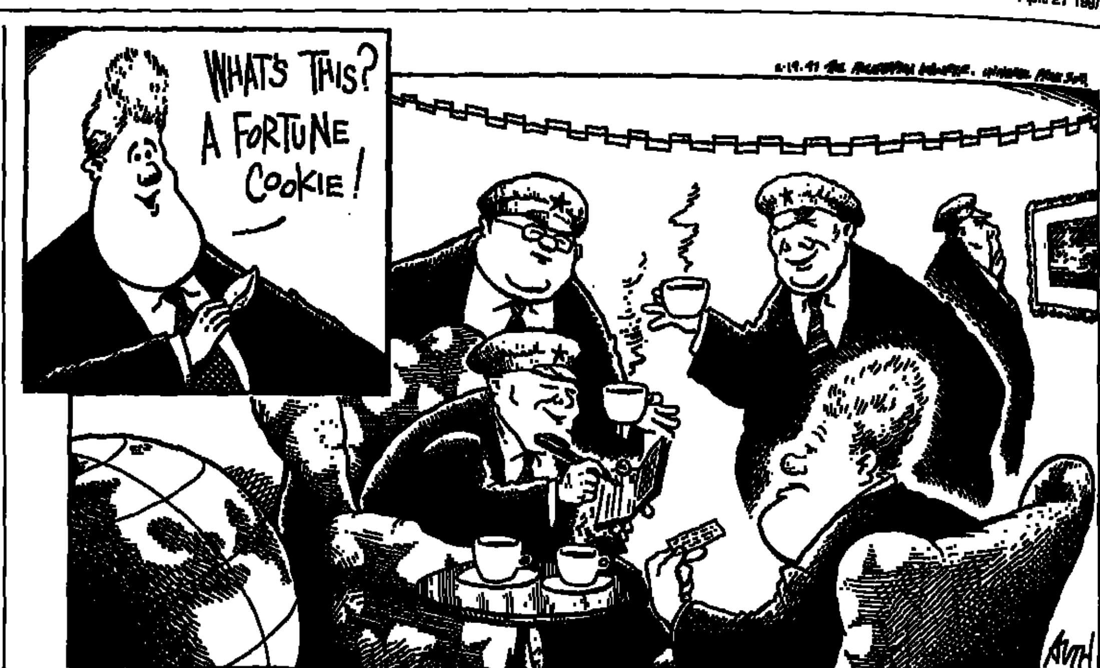
The Chinese have no idea what is about to hit them, when they take on organised American religion. Just ask the Russians, who were on the receiving end of the "Free Soviet Jewry" campaign. Under China's code on religions, a church may function under state control if it registers with the state. But this includes listing the names and addresses of priests and worshippers, which many are understandably reluctant to do. In China, Judaism is not even a recognised religion.

"Unless it changes its ways, China should be a disfavoured nation in every aspect of US foreign policy," says Gary Bauer, who runs the Family Research Council, the main think tank for religious conservatives, and the Washington-based lobbying group that has put together the ad campaign. Bauer is a skilled political manipulator, who did a great deal to make the anti-abortion cause look like family values, and then made family values into a conservative and religious cause. He has now rallied not only the trade unions, but the Southern Baptist Association, the Christian Coalition, Catholics and evangelical Protestants into a campaign of the righteous against the godless regime of Beijing.

"For social conservatives the most compelling — though not the only — reason is repression of China's growing religious community," Bauer explains. "The government views as subversive the estimated 100 million Buddhists, 17 million Muslims, 8 million Catholics and 30 million Protestants worshipping outside the state-controlled 'patriotic church' system."

There is a further ad campaign, aimed at America's powerful anti-abortion lobby, which claims "the Beijing communists continue to impose a ruthless population-control programme of forced sterilisation and abortion — these systemic practices rival the worst abuses that occurred under seven decades of communist rule in the Soviet Union".

Even before the Christian Coalition and other groups of the religious right rallied the Baptists and the US Catholic Conference to confront this once-arcane matter of trade policy, Republican Congressmen had begun ducking for cover. The most staunch free-marketeers and free-traders, such as the House majority leader, Congressman Dick Armey, who usually wears an Adam Smith tie, have backed away from their once-automatic support for MFN status.



"MARKETS FOR YOUR BUSINESSES, MONEY FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN, FORGET ABOUT OUR HUMAN RIGHTS AND YOU'LL HAVE YEARS TO REIGN."

The change has been dramatic. This year the Chamber of Commerce and corporate lobbies thought that they could finally drop the troublesome annual ritual of renewing China's trade favours and pass a law that would grant China permanent MFN status, and take the issue out of politics altogether.

Without that MFN status, China's toy exports, which now come into the US with no tariff, would start paying 70 per cent duty. The duty on steel products, currently less than 5 per cent, would jump to 20 per cent, and that on electrical products would go from less than 8 per cent to 35 per cent. China currently exports goods worth about $50 billion a year to the US, and buys $10 billion of US goods, a trade deficit against which the protectionists in the Democratic party have long complained. China's low-wage competition and lack of rights for workers have brought the trade unions into the fray.

Clinton is in the middle, getting hit by both sides. He has to decide by June 3 whether to renew China's MFN status for another year. Then the matter goes to Congress, which will probably vote in the very week that Hong Kong — and its thriving Christian community — reverts to China. If Congress votes against renewing MFN, Clinton can veto their decision. And given the power and fund-raising skills of the US corporate lobby, it will be difficult to amass the two-thirds majority required to overturn his veto. Boeing, Motorola and General Motors have hired the giant Edelman PR group, with a $4 million budget, to make the case for extending MFN.

But political pressure will be intense, partly because of the way that China and its businessmen are now part of the Clinton fund-raising scandal, and partly because the weakened Republican leader Newt Gingrich needs to placate his right wing. Gingrich had to take out a $300,000 personal loan last week from the former Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole to pay the penalty imposed on him by the House ethics committee. This was not exactly a sweetheart deal. Dole is getting 10 per cent interest a year, and since neither capital nor interest has to be repaid for eight years, the final debt will be $640,000 — a useful reminder of the power of compound interest. It also reveals the depth of Gingrich's difficulties, with his once devoted Republican congressmen balking at his squirming efforts to delay paying his fine, to try to use campaign funds, and to ask fellow congressmen to chip in.

"The only way Newt Gingrich will remain Speaker is to lead his party against the White House in a battle of political principle and high policy," argues Pat Buchanan, the rightwing political firebrand. His protectionist presidential campaign last year was the first, abortive attempt to put together this unlikely coalition of the religious right and blue-collar workers. The Republican establishment, the moneybags fund-raisers, and even the big guns of the Christian Coalition saw Buchanan win the New Hampshire primary last year with a passionate attack on free trade. They reeled from the prospect and rallied behind Dole. Now the unholy alliance of trade unions and the religious right is back, under rather less threatening management, and it threatens to inflict a serious political defeat on Clinton and his China policies.

AT THE same time, the Clinton administration's policy of steering China into the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is floundering badly, attacked by human rights critics and trade hawks, and weakened from within by the imminent resignations of the top US experts on China trade to a law and lobbying firm. Lee Sands, assistant US trade representative for Japan and China, and his deputy, Deborah Lehr, are both leaving government to join the law firm of their former boss, Mickey Kantor, who served as US trade representative and commerce secretary in the first Clinton administration.

The White House is wary of campaigning openly for China's trade status, because of the fund-raising embarrassments. The cause of human rights in China is also becoming important. Martin Lee, the leader of Hong Kong's largest political group, the Democratic party, met Clinton last week, after receiving the annual Freedom award of the National Endowment for Democracy.

He also met the secretary of state, Madeleine Albright. A lawyer, Lee simply stressed that Beijing had made certain formal and binding commitments to Britain about preserving Hong Kong's freedoms under the rubric "one country, two systems", and that the international community had a legal, commercial and moral interest in seeing that China kept its word.

This kind of access for the man who is likely to become a test case in China's stewardship of Hong Kong infuriates Beijing. Matters will shortly be made worse when the Dalai Lama comes to Washington, be given an audience with vice-president Al Gore, at which Clinton will "drop by". This is a curious piece of American protocol, the diplomatic equivalent of safe sex, under which the president can get to grips with controversial visitors without undue risk.

Lee told the Guardian that his case to the Americans was essentially about the rule of law, which he saw imperilled after the incoming China-backed government announced tough new laws that require police permission a week in advance for demonstrations. Political parties may be outlawed on grounds of "national security, public safety, public order, protection of public rights or morals, and protection of the rights and freedoms of others".

"That should cover everything," Lee said drily.

Clinton's perception of all this is acute. He is determined to make a clear distinction between China, whose behaviour is sometimes indefensible, and the principle of free trade itself, to which he is committed. He knows perfectly well that the trade unions and protectionists have Mexico, Chile and Japan in their sights if they succeed on China.

My guess is that the president will strike a deal with Congress to give a conditional three- or six-month extension to status, while closely monitoring human rights in China and the fate of Hong Kong. This will get Clinton out of a short-term political mess, but it raises two portentous and longer-term questions. Can the Beijing regime afford to cave in to such pressure from the foreign devils? And if not, can the Chinese economy afford a sudden collapse of their US market? If this all goes wrong, the overheated stock markets, the financially over-stretched east Asian economies and the extraordinary growth machine of global trade could all be heading for trouble.

John Gittings, page 14

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Yasser Arafat and his 'Tunisians' have turned the Palestinians' homeland into a ramshackle, nepotistic regime of extortion. **David Hirst** reports from Rimal

Shameless in Gaza

GAZA is the most conservative of Palestinian communities; its Islamist militants once set fire to a sea-front hotel, a restaurant and other such dens of iniquity.

So imagine the pious horror at the opening of Gaza's first and only nightclub. On a Thursday evening of the Muslim weekend, I found the Zahra al-Mada'in, the Flower of the Cities, packed almost to capacity, not just with lonely young men come to admire Gaza's first belly dancers and songstresses — locally recruited gypsies — but with entire families, women, children and even a babe-in-arms. In other smart or risqué places, you can add illicit liquor to your Coca-Cola, but here — in another Gazan first — you can order your scotch or your Israeli Maccabee beer on the very premises. However, the oddest thing is not so much the place, but the clientele: they are mainly "Tunisians", not Gazans at all.

Tunis was Yasser Arafat's last headquarters in exile, and "the Tunisians" is a nickname which Gazans gave to those, officially known as "returnees", who came with him when, following the Oslo accord, he established himself here instead. There are about 10,000 of them, bureaucrats who run his Palestinian Authority, former guerillas who dominate his enormous security apparatus.

"The Tunisians" have "come home" to the soil of Palestine itself. But the terrible irony is that they are not merely strangers in their own land, they are for the most part disliked, despised, even hated. It is they who introduced such abominations as Zahra al-Mada'in. But it is not just Hamas and Islamic Jihad, or bigots in general, who feel the shock. Liberals who welcome any challenge to the dour local mores feel it too. For almost everyone, "the Tunisians" are as alien, as unfit to rule, as those — Turks, British, Egyptians, Israelis — who came before them. And because they are actually Palestinians, and came as "liberators", the shock is even worse.

Arafat's Palestine Revolution never made itself very popular, among governments, élites or even ordinary people of the territories it passed through. But at least in Jordan, in the sixties, its men truly fought and died. So — though with less purpose or conviction — did they in Lebanon in the seventies and eighties. Obviously, during the eighties and nineties, they could not fight from Tunis, and other far-flung Arab countries in which they fetched up, but at least, as members of the world's richest liberation movement, they continued to pump money into local economies.

Here, in the homeland itself, far from fighting the former Zionist foe, they lead the collaboration with it. They may attract money — in the form of international aid — to this poorest of Palestinian communities, but they take at least as much away from it. They are oppressive — and immeasurably corrupt.

"We live in amazing, shameful times," said one of Gaza's merchant princes, and a former Fatah fighter himself, "but you should know that every revolution has its fighters, thinkers and profiteers. Our fighters have been killed, our thinkers assassinated, and all we have left are the profiteers. These don't think even primarily of the cause, they don't think about it at all. They know that they are just transients here, as they were in Tunis, and, as with any regime whose end is near, they think only of profiting from it while they can."

This is a damning indictment, but if any system can be measured by the conduct of its bureaucrats it is a fair one. In fact, the justice of it hits even a casual visitor in the eye. Just go to the district of Rimal.

Rimal means "sand", and on this former wasteland there is now arising, at incredible speed, the most up-market neighbourhood of "liberated" Gaza. You might not think it at first sight; a sand-smothered, refuse-strewn mess of empty lots amid shacks that are disappearing and half-finished concrete monsters that are taking their place, it differs little in spirit from the rest of this desolate, infinitely decrepit and unsightly city. But it is mainly here that "the Tunisians" have taken root, with their amazing array of "ministries", "authorities" and special "agencies", police stations and sentry posts, choice rooftop apartments, villas and places of entertainment. Here is Arafat's own sea-front bureau — al-Muntada, The Club — with all the "presidential" trappings he so adores, and here, in the very next building, is the Zahra al-Mada'in cabaret.

Here you will sooner or later run into Suha, his young wife, out for lunch at Le Mirage, an exclusive sea-front restaurant, with her infant daughter and a posse of Force-17 bodyguards. You will run into her, at least, when she is not in Paris, where she does her shopping and can find a decent hairdresser, unlike the first, disastrous Gazan one, who reportedly turned her blonde locks almost orange. And you are bound to come across Susie, her ample British nanny who affects leopard-skin tights and often has too much to drink, a condition in which she is apt to dispense indiscretions about the presidential household, threatening, some fear, another Middle Eastern nanny scandal of Netanyahu proportions.

Suha Arafat: in charge of private slush fund PHOTO: CYRIL LETOWNEW



Building on sand . . . While ordinary Palestinians continue to fight on the streets against Jewish settlements, their rulers are busy lining their own pockets PHOTOGRAPH: NADAV NEUHAUS

Among the fancy new villas, fanciest is that of Abu Mazen, key negotiator of the ill-fated Oslo accord. It is not clear who paid for this $2 million-plus affair, all balconies and balustrades in gothic profusion, but the graffiti which some irreverent scoundrel scrawled on its wall proclaimed that "this is your reward for selling Palestine".

Lifestyles match. Nabil Shaath, the highly articulate minister of planning much seen on Western TV screens, recently took a wife young enough to be his daughter. He required four receptions to celebrate this event, in Cairo, Gaza — and two in Jerusalem. Because his Israeli friends could not go to the one in East Jerusalem's Orient House, that "illegal" outpost of the Palestinian Authority, he had another in the Ambassador Hotel.

For salutary contrast with Rimal, just stroll up the coast where, just beyond Le Mirage, you will come upon the awful squalor and open sewers of the Shati' refugee camp, conditions resembling those in which most Gazans live.

There, in a windowless concrete block they call "the café", I asked some day labourers, idled by yet another Israeli border closure, whether they thought that Gaza's per capita income, far from rising, had actually fallen by as much as 39 per cent since the Oslo accord. For that is what a recent UN survey says. "More like 75 per cent," one replied. "some no longer think it a shame to send their children out to beg." That also seems to be borne out by the UN report, which records an "alarming" increase in "child labour".

More shocking, really, than the contrast itself is what lies behind it. When he first came here, Arafat said he would turn Gaza into a "new Singapore". Palestinian businessmen, who made their fortunes building the Arab oil states, would help him build his. But, three years on, it is clear that none will seriously touch it. Not just the Israelis deter them, with their repeated frontier closures that bedevil businessmen as well as workers. In truth, Arafat does not want them either.

For they would undermine his control, achieved through a combination of police surveillance and money power. So instead of any kind of independent, creative, wealth-producing capitalism, he and his coterie of unofficial economic "advisers" have thrown up a ramshackle, nepotistic edifice of monopoly, racketeering and naked extortion that enriches them as it further impoverishes society at large.

Two years ago, the al-Bahr company barely existed. Al-Bahr means "sea". But Gazans now dub it "the ocean", because, they say, "it is swallowing Gaza whole". Legally speaking, not being officially registered, it should not be operating at all. Yet it is so brazen about its powerful connections that — to the impotent indignation of the Palestinian "parliament" — it even uses the Authority's letterheads. It belongs to Arafat, or, more precisely, to his wife Suha and the other "shareholders" who handle his private finances.

AL-BAHR — who else? — runs the Zahra al-Mada'in nightclub. The premises were supposed to go by open tender to the most qualified bidder. But Arafat just signed a decree placing it in his protégé's hands. It is never by fair, and often by quite foul, means that Arafat Incorporated moves into real estate, entertainment, computers, advertising, medicine, insurance. Only the most powerful Gazan businessmen can resist its encroachments. It goes chiefly after small and medium fry. These are pressed into "partnership" with al-Bahr.

Al-Bahr is the new, strictly domestic instrument of Arafat's takeover of the Gazan economy. It complements already existing monopolies, for the import of such basic commodities as cement, petrol or flour, which he operates in complicity with the Israelis. For example, out of the $74 for which a ton of cement is sold in Gaza, $17 goes to the Authority, and $17 into his own account in a Tel Aviv bank.

It is no secret what Arafat uses this money for. "I shall give you all you want if you obey and protect me — and give me all I want." That has always been his message to his nomenklatura, and it has been amazingly successful. For what resistance can be expected from an apparatus whose minister of civil affairs, Jamil Tarifi, a big contractor, goes on building Israeli settlements even as the Palestinian people threaten a new intifada over Har Homa? Or whose high officials use their VIP cars to sail through Israeli checkpoints on their way to the fleshpots of Tel Aviv even as Israeli border closures rob day labourers of their menial wage?

Rarely can a revolution have degenerated like Arafat's — and yet survived. It only survives because, in robbing his people to bribe his bureaucrats, he has proved so great a commitment to the peace process that the parties on which he now completely depends — Israelis, Americans, the international community at large — are willing to ignore, even encourage, his manifest corruptions. The Israelis may be embarrassed by the latest, scandalous revelations of their leading newspaper, Ha'aretz, about the Arafat slush fund that the great peace-maker, Yitzhak Rabin, authorised. But so long as Arafat goes on bending to *their* conception of the peace, they will go on letting him draw on it.

European governments would be far more embarrassed if it were established that Arafat really does earn far more from al-Bahr and his illicit monopolies than from all their aid combined. But unless the scandal becomes too great, they will go on paying too. But they delude themselves if they think that they can go on propping him up for ever. And in this regard, it seems, Arafat and his "Tunisians" are more clear-headed than they are. They know that there is a point beyond which even he cannot go without risking his people's wrath.

Small wonder then that, according to Ha'aretz, a part of Arafat's secret fund is earmarked for "emergency situations", such as a coup or a civil war, in which he, his family and immediate entourage would be forced to flee into exile once more, and re-establish the leadership from there. They know, better than anyone, that the peace process, and all they get out of it, is built, like the Zahra al-Mada'in, on nothing more solid than the fine white powdery sands of Rimal.

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IRA brings chaos to London

Stuart Millar

THE security services insisted that terrorists would not be allowed to disrupt the UK election after a series of coded telephone bomb warnings on Monday brought the worst transport chaos to London and the Southeast for years.

Senior anti-terrorism officers expressed confidence that adequate steps had been taken to protect the democratic process, despite the IRA's recent high profile successes in halting the Grand National and bringing extensive disruption across Britain.

David Veness, the Metropolitan police assistant commissioner with responsibility for specialist operations, said: "The election was always in the forefront of our minds as an opportunity likely to be exploited by the IRA . . . It presents a significant security challenge, as current events are demonstrating, but there is every confidence that the democratic process will be maintained, especially the process of recording votes on May 1."

Mr Veness declined to outline plans for protecting polling stations, but said security services had been planning for a considerable period how to combat any threat.

Monday's alerts, coming three days after similar IRA tactics brought chaos to road and rail transport in the Midlands and northern England, have increased fears that the IRA believes it can cause widespread disruption virtually at will.

The threats started around 6.45am, warning that devices were set to explode at a selection of transport targets across London. Police said the warnings were extremely vague, and none was made to the security services or the intended targets. As services returned to normal, no confirmed devices had been found.

Much of London was effectively cut off for most of the day. With the capital gridlocked at the peak of the rush hour, road conditions were described as "some of the worst for many years". At the height of the alert London was a patchwork of areas either packed solid with stranded pedestrians and traffic, or cordoned off and eerily quiet.

Four mainline London stations — Paddington, King's Cross, St Pancras, and Charing Cross — were evacuated and remained closed for several hours. Surrounding roads were sealed off, causing huge traffic jams as motorists struggled to find alternative routes.

Luton and Gatwick airports were closed for most of the day, with thousands of passengers stranded on aircraft unable to disembark.

The Prime Minister expressed his contempt for the IRA and Sinn Fein, and praised the "stoicism and good humour" of the millions of commuters whose journeys had been disrupted. It was essential to take the threats seriously, he said.

Tony Blair, the Labour leader, said: "This is a clear attempt by the IRA to disrupt the British general election. We will not let them do so."

Paddy Ashdown, leader of the Liberal Democrats, called the tactic "pathetic", and said that as Londoners had survived the Blitz they were well-equipped to cope with the problems on Monday.

● Two Scots Guardsmen serving life for murdering a Catholic teenager are to have their sentences reviewed five years early, the Northern Ireland Secretary, Sir Patrick Mayhew, announced in one of his final acts in office.

Sinn Fein reacted with fury to the news that Guardsmen James Fisher and Mark Wright, who shot dead Peter McBride in Belfast in 1992, have had their review brought forward.

Bishop backs sex and 'marriage' for gay clergy

Alex Bellos

ONE of the bishops who wrote the rule that gay clergy must be celibate said this week he now believed they should be allowed to have sexual relationships and partake in a form of "marriage".

John Austin Baker, the retired bishop of Salisbury, is the most prominent Anglican to speak out for gay rights. His comments will exacerbate tensions in the Church of England over the issue, the most divisive to face it since the ordination of women.

Speaking at a public lecture in London, the bishop said he felt obliged to disagree with the policy stating that sexually active gay people could be accepted into the Church but clergy had to be celibate.

He said: "The bishops saw same sex erotic relationships as incompatible with the clerical vocation . . . I find myself obliged to now dissent from that judgment.

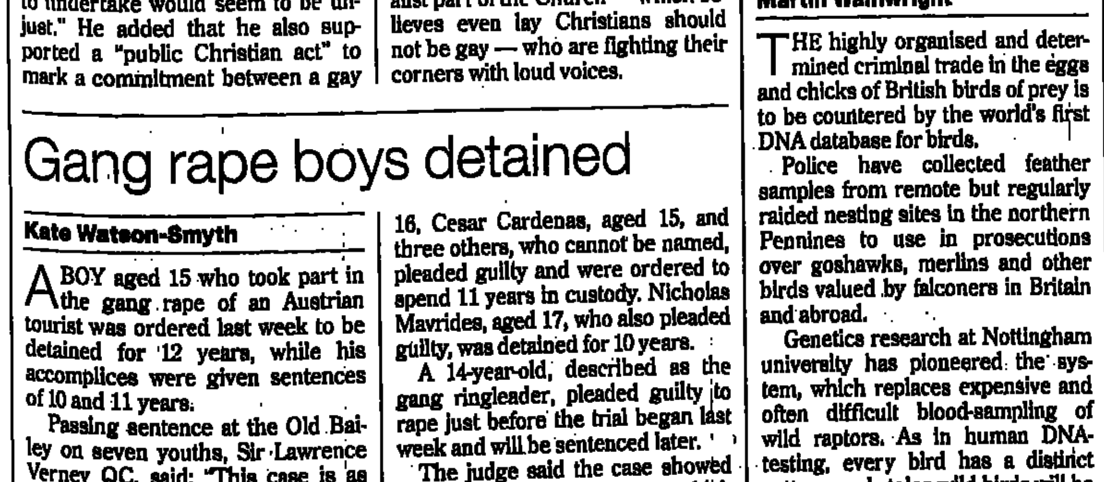
"If the Church is willing to accept the ministry of homosexuals, then to impose on them a condition which most clergy are not prepared to undertake would seem to be unjust." He added that he also supported a "public Christian act" to mark a commitment between a gay couple. He dismissed the argument that the public would not have confidence in gay clergy by saying that such views "tell us nothing about the essential moral status of such relationships".

Bishop Baker's comments are doubly significant because he was one of the authors of the House of Bishops' 1991 report Issues in Human Sexuality, which set out the guidelines on homosexuality.

Supporters and critics of the bishop called his speech a "bombshell" for the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, who himself described the lecture as "a significant departure from the Church's current mind".

Dr Carey said: "There is no question of any sudden change in the Church's official position regarding homosexual practice . . . Nevertheless, [Bishop Baker's] lecture deserves to be read with respect and care to the continuing debate."

Dr Carey's words reflect the difficult middle ground the Church occupies on homosexuality. It is becoming increasingly hard to placate the pro-gay lobby and the traditionalist part of the Church — which believes even lay Christians should not be gay — who are fighting their corners with loud voices.



Gang rape boys detained

Kate Watson-Smyth

A BOY aged 15 who took part in the gang rape of an Austrian tourist was ordered last week to be detained for 12 years, while his accomplices were given sentences of 10 and 11 years.

Passing sentence at the Old Bailey on seven youths, Sir Lawrence Verney QC, said: "This case is as horrifying and revolting as any could be."

The court had heard that the defendants were aged between 14 and 17 when they repeatedly raped the tourist, aged 32, in London. She was also kicked, punched and forced to undergo other "sexual indignities" during the hour-long ordeal.

Allan Agum, aged 15, had pleaded not guilty but was convicted. His brother Eduardo, aged 16, Cesar Cardenas, aged 15, and three others, who cannot be named, pleaded guilty and were ordered to spend 11 years in custody. Nicholas Mavrides, aged 17, who also pleaded guilty, was detained for 10 years.

A 14-year-old, described as the gang ringleader, pleaded guilty to rape just before the trial began last week and will be sentenced later.

The judge said the case showed "exceptional wickedness which merited exceptional sentences", but that Mavrides was given a lower sentence because he had admitted his part in the offence before it received publicity.

"But because one of you contested the charge, the court has heard the victim give evidence and describe her appalling experience. No one who has listened to her account is ever likely to forget it."



Nests of peregrines are under increasing threat PHOTO: DENIS THORPE

DNA sets trap for bird thieves

Martin Wainwright

THE highly organised and determined criminal trade in the eggs and chicks of British birds of prey is to be countered by the world's first DNA database for birds.

Police have collected feather samples from remote but regularly raided nesting sites in the northern Pennines to use in prosecutions over goshawks, merlins and other birds valued by falconers in Britain and abroad.

Genetics research at Nottingham university has pioneered the system, which replaces expensive and often difficult blood-sampling of wild raptors. As in human DNA-testing, every bird has a distinct pattern, and stolen wild birds will be traceable back to pillaged nests.

"You would be astonished at the number of people who keep falcons," said Steve Downing, wildlife officer for West Yorkshire police, which is testing the system on its own patch and at nests covered by Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Derbyshire police forces. "Nest robbers know exactly what they are doing, and breeds such as peregrines, hen harriers and merlins are under increasing threat."

Every merlin chick in West Yorkshire's main breeding grounds, Keighley and Calderdale, was stolen last year, together with all but one of the county's young peregrines and all but four of hen harrier chicks at the 12 known nesting sites.

"Thieves will now know that we have a sample from just about every nest," said Mr Downing, who receives regular tip-offs about suspect birds from legitimate falconers. Fanciers will pay £700 or more for a young hawk, with a "genuine wild" pedigree often putting up the black market value.

The genetic research has been funded by £20,000 from government agencies and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The effective protection of nests could see the numbers of birds of prey revive dramatically. Merlins and peregrine falcons number about 1,250 breeding pairs in Britain, hen harriers 650 and goshawks 450.

The scheme will be tested during this year's breeding season and extended to the rest of Britain if it proves effective.

In Brief

THE Bridgewater case appeal against the conviction of four men in connection with the murder of Carl Bridgewater nearly 20 years ago, opened at the Court of Appeal on Monday.

THE Commission for Racial Equality is investigating barristers' clerks over an allegation that their recruitment practices amount to "institutional racial discrimination".

SANDRA GREGORY, sentenced in 1996 to 25 years in a Thai jail for attempting to smuggle heroin, is to be allowed to complete her term in Britain.

FIREFIGHTERS in Essex are likely to continue strike action to reverse £1.5 million cuts in spending, despite threats of suspension from the council if more stoppages take place.

A BRITISH transsexual has failed in his bid to be legally recognised as the father of his partner's child at the European Court of Human Rights. He was born a woman 41 years ago and underwent surgery 20 years later.

ETON COLLEGE, the exclusive public school in Windsor, Berkshire has published its accounts for the first time. Assets of £131 million make it Britain's 600th largest company.

ANNA WHITE, a key member of the teaching team that turned around the troubled Ridings school in Halifax, has been appointed permanent head.

HEALTH officials confirmed another outbreak of *E. coli* food poisoning in Scotland. A woman aged 27 and her daughter, aged two, are being monitored at their home on a cattle and sheep farm near Inverness.

IMMIGRATION officials in Australia confirmed that the multiple murderer, Archie McCafferty, who was born in Glasgow but left almost 40 years ago, is to be deported to Scotland when he is released from prison next month because he technically remains a British citizen.

PHOTOGRAPHS and details of missing children are now appearing on milk cartons as part of an initiative following similar schemes in America.

THE Observer newspaper terminated the contract of the writer Will Self after he admitted taking heroin on the Prime Minister's campaign plane.

SIR HARRY NICHOLS, the former trade union leader and general secretary of the Labour party under Harold Wilson, has died at the age of 92.

Jim Lewis is on holiday

Tories' campaign riven over Europe

A single issue multiplied John Major's problems, write **Patrick Wintour** and **Andy McSmith**

JOHN MAJOR is not one of nature's history men, but he is haunted by the memory of the debate about free trade and protectionism that split the Conservative party over the Corn Laws in 1846 and was fought out in 1905, bringing electoral disaster to Balfour's government.

It has long been his fear that the 1997 election may become the catalyst for a similar split on Europe when Tory divisions over a single currency explode.

At Central Office, a valiant effort is being made to claim that, through a personal *tour de force*, Mr Major turned a potentially disastrous week to his party's advantage. Private polls, it is said, show the divisions over Europe are a negative, but are discounted through familiarity. More importantly, the past week not only pushed Europe up the voters' list of concerns, but also showed that the Tories are once again the more sceptical of the parties. Labour simply cannot match the Tory love affair with the pound, let alone its patriotic suspicion of Helmut Kohl's Germany.

It is a plucky piece of spinning, but most observers probably agree that last week was when the election started to slip from Mr Major's grasp. Instead of taking the attack to Labour, he found himself overwhelmed by revolts, dissident ministers, internal party management and fights over xenophobic adverts.

Yet the disaster had been coming for nearly a year. As long ago as last summer, the party chairman, Brian Mawhinney, learned that members of the rightwing '92 group of MPs, organised by Sir George Gardiner, now a member of the Referendum party, were canvassing a common line against a single currency in their personal manifestos.

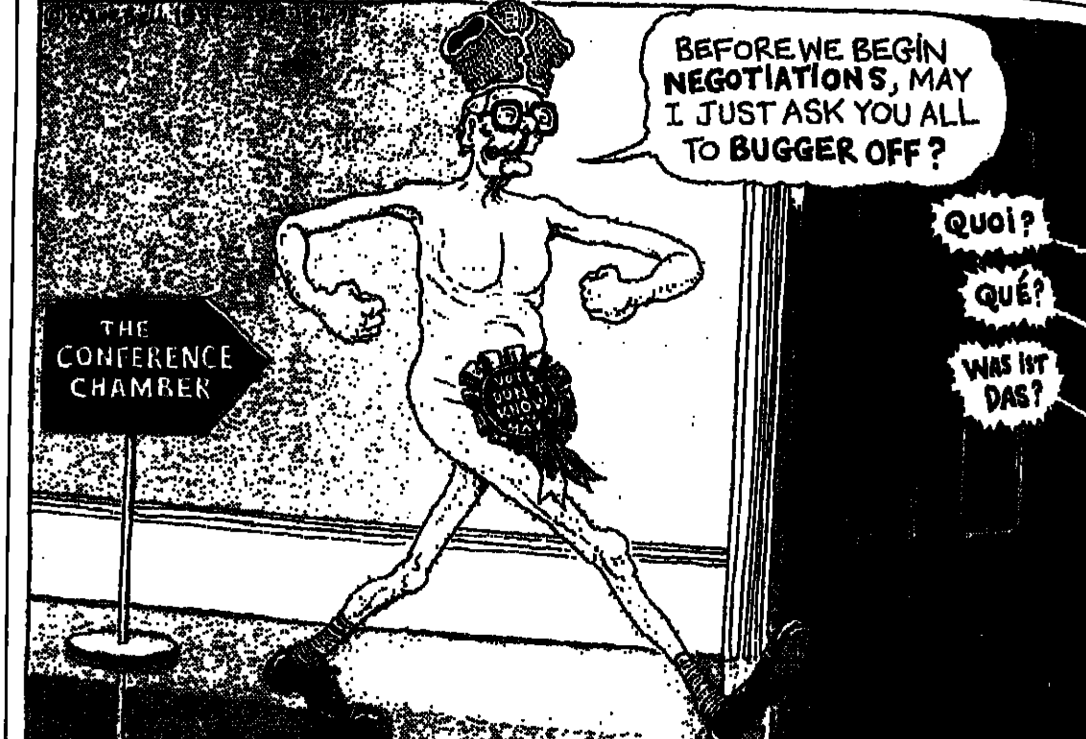
The sceptics were not going to be caught out. If Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, were to block the Prime Minister from ruling out a single currency in the next Parliament, the MPs would give themselves the moral authority to resist by making their opposition clear in personal election addresses.

The scale of the potential rebellion became clear when a survey last September showed that as many as 186 candidates planned to oppose the euro. Paul Sykes, a multi-millionaire businessman, took it upon himself to write to all of them saying he was willing to back their election expenses.

The time bomb, primed to go off in the middle of the election campaign, had been assembled. If it was to be defused, Central Office had to persuade pro-European cabinet ministers to accept a more sceptic line. That, in essence, meant Mr Clarke. Through December and January, Central Office and many in the Cabinet tried to persuade him to let the Government take a more sceptic line. One minister explained: "We did not think we could change Mr Clarke's mind and formally rule out a single currency in the next Parliament, but we wanted to give the electorate a large nod and wink that it was not going to happen."

On January 23, Mr Clarke finally gave ground. The Cabinet jointly agreed a statement: "Upon the information available to us at present, we reached the conclusion that it was very unlikely, though not impossible, that countries' performance against the Maastricht criteria will be sufficiently clear and stable for a single currency to proceed on January 1, 1999. On that basis, there is a strong argument for delay by the European Union as a whole. If it did proceed without reliable convergence, we would not be part of it."

The principle of a single currency had not been rejected, but the shift in tone was clear. By last weekend the strength of feeling among candidates was overwhelming. All but 20 in Tory-held seats had taken the Sykes shilling. One sceptic put it acidly: "Major calls his policy 'Wait and see' or 'Negotiate and decide'. Well, we have seen and we have decided. We don't want anything to do with a single currency."



It was as if two election campaigns were being fought. One on the ground, rabidly anti-Brussels, the other at head office, methodically unpicking the Labour manifesto and praising booming Britain.

Mr Major bowed to the inevitable and sanctioned cabinet minister William Hague to confirm publicly that backbenchers were free to write whatever they wanted in their manifestos. Ministers, however, would be expected to abide by collective responsibility.

THIS immediately blew up in the Government's face. A rumour started to circulate on Tuesday last week that a minister had broken ranks. By the evening it was clear that the culprit was junior health minister John Horam, the MP for Orpington.

"I am opposed to replacing the pound sterling since this would take away more of our independence," he had written in a newsletter.

The crisis deepened when it was reported that James Paice, a junior employment minister, had also been indiscreet in his election address. But soon afterwards both Mr Horam and Mr Paice agreed to retract their innocent mistakes. Mr Major hit the roof at Mr Horam's disloyalty but he had apologised and nobody wanted to hand the sceptics a martyr.

But, faced by stories in the press suggesting that as many as 150 Tory candidates in winnable seats were ruling out a single currency, Mr Major decided to confront the issue of Europe head on.

At a press conference last week, in a plea that provoked sympathy and pity in equal measure, Mr Major essentially threw away the Tory strategy of campaigning on the economy by saying "the central issue of the campaign is Europe. It is where the heart and gut of this election lies on the doorstep."

Clasping his hands together he made a dramatic appeal to his own backbenchers: "Like me or loathe me," he said, "do not bind my hands when I am negotiating on behalf of the British nation." Asserting that he had to answer to history, he added: "I will negotiate in the interests of the UK as a whole, not in the convenient party political interests of the Conservative party."

To some Tory sceptics his remarks had the sniff of Ramsay MacDonald's betrayal of Labour in 1930. But to the delight of Mr Clarke, he set out the potential benefits, as well as the disadvantages, of a single currency. Yet, as he probably expected, his appeal fell on deaf ears. Within hours his authority was undermined as Eric Forth, the employment minister, issued an election leaflet opposing "any further transfer of powers from Britain to Europe". Asked if that meant ruling out joining a single currency, Mr Forth unsmiling replied: "That's what my literature says, and I stand by it."

John Redwood then twisted the knife by pointing out that no more negotiations remained over the single currency. All the key decisions had been taken. Mr Major had no more reason to delay his decision.

Mr Major then appeased the sceptic tendency still further by confirming a free vote for backbenchers on a single currency. But even this was mishandled. Nobody had forewarning that he would make the announcement last week, so forcing Mr Clarke to admit he had not been consulted. If he had in fact announced the free vote many months earlier, rather than in the middle of the campaign, he might have spared himself much agony.

Over at Labour headquarters — which had ironically promised to take the campaign by the scruff of the neck last week — there was a firm belief that the election was won. Labour strategists do not just blame the Tory disarray over Europe, but the relentless negativism of their campaign: "It may sound a terribly simple point to make, but they did not give anyone a reason to back the Tories."

Comment, page 15

PM defends ad of Blair as Euro-dummy

Rebecca Smithers and Andrew Culf

A DEFIANT John Major last week refused to apologise for the Tories' controversial new advertisement featuring Tony Blair sitting on Chancellor Kohl's knee, even though it was attacked as "puerile" and "pathetic" by MPs from all parties.

He added fuel to the flames by accusing Mr Blair of "*naïveté* and inexperience" and warning that sending him to European Union talks would be like sending "a fly to a spiders' convention".

His comments came after a day of complaints against the advertisement. The German government distanced itself from the row, claiming it was its policy not to comment on election campaigns in other countries.

The advertisement, developed from an idea by the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael Heseltine, depicted Mr Blair as a ventriloquist's dummy, apparently being controlled by the German leader. It highlights Mr Blair's lack of experience, suggesting it would make him ill-equipped to negotiate in Europe, and warned: "Don't send a boy to do a man's job."

Mr Major insisted that the advertisement was making a serious point to underline his claim that Mr Blair had already given up Britain's negotiating stance ahead of the Amsterdam summit of European heads of government in June.

But pro-European Tory MP Edwina Currie described the advertisement as "puerile" and offensive to Mr Kohl. "We should not be portraying Chancellor Kohl as an ogre of any kind."

An Advertising Standards Authority spokesman said it had received 20 complaints from members of the public. Many of the objectors were concerned about the negative image the advertisement might give Britain's EU partners, while others considered it offensive to both Mr Kohl and Mr Blair.

Labour strategists said the Kohl advert was an indication of the "panic and desperation" in the Tory ranks.

Mark Lawson adds: Earlier in the week Tony Blair employed a dog to try to convince the electorate that he was trustworthy. In one of the strangest political television broadcasts ever, Mr Blair compared Britain to a bulldog.

At the beginning of the five-minute broadcast, the animal was hangdog. However, as Mr Blair gave an interview about his political beliefs, cutaways showed the hound recovering.



The Tory ad with Blair as Kohl's ventriloquist's dummy

"I'd like to get the tax burden down," said the Labour leader. He emphasised the final word and the dog raised an eye. "I am a British patriot!" declared Mr Blair. "And I want the best out of Europe for Britain." This kind of thing was clearly the rhetorical equivalent of Winalot, and the dog broke its leash and ran free across English countryside.

But, in content, the ad is classic New Labour. It is ideologically transvestite, deliberately wearing an image — the British bulldog — traditionally associated with the right.

Even so, the use of the bulldog metaphor seems risky. Does New Labour really believe that the central problem of the past 18 years was that Britain and British patriotism were kept on too tight a leash by the Tories? Surely, from the Falklands to privatisation to the money markets, they let the beast run.

In fact, the bulldog sequence could have been used without difficulty in any of Mrs Thatcher's campaigns. New Labour may take this as a compliment.

All the Guardian and Observer election coverage and more can be found on the Election Website: http://election.guardian.co.uk

Major plans bumper honours list

David Hencke

JOHN MAJOR is planning to create 30 more peers in one of the biggest honours lists since Harold Wilson's infamous resignation "Lavender List" 21 years ago if he is defeated on May 1.

The announcement of 21 new peers last week — including Lord Hurd, Lord Hattersley and Lord Steel — will be followed by a resignation list expected to include many old friends. Contenders include Tristan Garel-Jones, the former Foreign Office minister; a raft of people retiring from the Tory backbench 1922 Committee, including former secret agent Sir Cranley Onslow; and lobbyists such as Sir Tim Bell and the author Michael Dobbs.

The surprise mid-election dissolution list has been prompted by a huge backlog of political favours owed by both the Prime Minister and Tony Blair to their respective friends and colleagues.

By convention, the Prime Minister is expected to give any former cabinet minister retiring from Parliament a life peerage, while Mr Blair is keen to increase his younger contingent in the House of Lords to carry through his pledge to expel the hereditary peers.

Labour is committed to setting up a committee of both Houses of Parliament to consider wide-ranging reforms of the House of Lords, including replacing it with an elected chamber or abolishing it.

Sources said that Mr Major will spread the honours over three lists, including the Queen's Birthday Honours List, to lessen public outcry over such a big exercise.

The Tories honoured include the Guinness family millionaire and former trade secretary, Paul Channon; the former transport secretary, David Howell; and the former Leader of the Commons, John Biffen, who was sacked by Margaret Thatcher. None served in a Major government.

The retiring MPs Kenneth Baker, Sir Patrick Mayhew and Douglas Hurd were all ennobled but there was surprise that Mr Major has also honoured John Patten, who left office as education secretary under a cloud in 1994.

Labour's list included the former deputy leader Roy Hattersley; Joan Lestor, a Callaghan government education minister; the ex-deputy chief whip Don Dixon; John Evans; Doug Hoyle, former chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party; Sir Geoffrey Lofthouse; and Peter Shore, the ex-Labour cabinet minister and Eurosceptic.

Particular interest was shown in peerages for three former MPs — Doug Hoyle, John Evans and Sir Geoffrey — who stood down at the last minute. They denied being asked to leave with the promise of a peerage to make way for Blairite candidates.

Three retiring Liberal Democrat MPs were ennobled: the former leader Sir David Steel, Sir Russell Johnston and David Alton. Sir James Molyneaux, ex-leader of the Ulster Unionists, was also made a Lord.

None of the peers was informed of the move until last week, and they expressed amazement that the list was being announced during the election campaign.

But colleagues close to Mr Major said that it was part of a wider strategy to leave him room for manoeuvre for further honours — including peerages for possible landslide election casualties such as the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, should they lose and not wish to stand for re-election to Parliament.

New HK head admits giving cash to Tories

Andrew Higgins in Hong Kong

THE shipping tycoon selected by Beijing to rule Hong Kong acknowledged last week that he had given money to the Conservatives — and said his past involvement in Tory fund-raising had convinced him of the need to ban local politicians from seeking cash abroad.

Among what Hong Kong's future chief executive, Tung Chee-hwa, described as "modest donations" to Tory party coffers was a £50,000 contribution before the last general election in 1992.

The party chairman was then Chris Patten. After losing his seat in Bath, Mr Patten was appointed by John Major as Britain's 28th and last colonial governor in Hong Kong. Hong Kong's plutocrats, once among the Tories' most generous supporters, have since shifted their loyalty to the Chinese communist party and regularly denounce Mr Patten.

The issue of campaign donations from foreign, particularly Asian, businessmen has dominated American politics in recent months, tainting President Clinton and fuelling charges of policy for sale. As a British colony until July 1, Hong Kong faces few restrictions on what it can donate to British elections.

Mr Tung, a Liverpool-educated millionaire, earlier this month announced bitterly contested proposals to outlaw foreign funding for Hong Kong political groups. He also wants to curb the right to protest and organise political groups after the handover.

"I have in the past made modest donations to the Conservative party. This is a fact well known to everybody," he said. It is the first time Mr Tung, former honorary consul for Monaco, has spoken publicly on the issue.

"And as a result of that, I am particularly sensitive that this should not happen in Hong Kong," he added. He did not explain why his experience as a contributor to the Tories had put him off allowing outsiders to contribute to Hong Kong groups.

Hong Kong funnelled so much money into the Conservative party in the past that party treasurers opened an offshore account in Jersey to handle the contributions. The approach of Chinese rule has all but ended the flow.

John Gittings, page 14

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April 27 1997

University intake tilted towards rich

John Carvel

YOUNG people whose parents have postcodes in rich areas are five times more likely to get to university than contemporaries from working-class neighbourhoods with low incomes, according to research published last week by the higher education funding quango.

The wealthiest quarter of young people, from areas with affluent lifestyles and a high proportion of non-manual workers, have about a 50 per cent chance of becoming undergraduates before the age of 21. The poorest quarter, from areas of high unemployment and a high proportion of manual workers, have an 11 per cent chance.

Although more students are going to university as mature entrants, the prospects of success for people from more deprived backgrounds do not improve with age.

The findings come from the first attempt to match the postcodes of students applying to enter university with an analysis of the latest national census to provide a sharp-focus description of small neighbourhoods of about 150 households.

Brian Fender, chief executive of the Higher Education Funding Council for England, which commissioned the research from Peter Batey and Peter Brown of Liverpool university, said the "startlingly wide variation" in entry rates of rich and poor had important implications for the number of university places that might eventually be required.

On average 30 per cent of young people went to university. If children from more deprived backgrounds reached this average rate, more than 100,000 additional higher education places would be needed.

The evidence has been submitted to Sir Ron Dearing, the Government's educational troubleshooter, who is heading a committee of inquiry into higher education. He is due to report in June on the size, shape, purpose and funding of the universities and is keeping his recommendations under wraps until after the general election to avoid political controversy.

The Department for Education and Employment has told the inquiry that there will be a shortage of jobs suitable for graduates if universities continue to expand to accommodate all students qualified to enter. It said it would not be profitable for public money to be spent on educating graduates for dead-end jobs.

Improving access for young people from poorer backgrounds might therefore imply fewer places for the children of the rich.

The funding council report found that young people from "very high income" professional neighbourhoods in exclusive areas had a 73 per cent chance of getting to university. In neighbourhoods of families "with large detached properties in stockbroker belts", the chance was 57 per cent.

At the bottom of the scale, young people from blue-collar families in council homes in areas of high unemployment had only a 7 per cent chance of getting to university. This suggested that the 30 per cent now going to university "should not be viewed as a natural maximum but as a composite of very different rates", said the researchers.

Health service's ethnic nurse numbers fall

David Brindle

THE number of black and Asian nurses in the health service is falling sharply despite measures to boost their recruitment, official figures suggest.

Fewer than three in every 100 nursing staff under 25 are from an ethnic minority background, according to Department of Health statistics made public by a health trade union. Fewer than one in 100 is black.

Among staff aged 55-64, however, more than 11 in every 100 are from an ethnic minority and almost nine in every 100 are black.

The Manufacturing, Science and Finance union, which represents many community nursing staff, described the figures as "of stunning significance".

The figures released by MSF show that, at the end of September 1995, 88.5 per cent of all nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff were white, 3.7 per cent black, 1.2 per cent Asian and 1.7 per cent from another minority.

Although these proportions compare favourably with the population as a whole, of which 5.7 per cent is from an ethnic minority, it is the breakdown of the NHS nursing workforce by age which gives cause for concern.

Roger Kline, MSF national secretary for the health service, said the figures showed that all the many reports and initiatives on racism in the NHS had been "as useful as the band playing on the Titanic".

A spokeswoman for the health department said the NHS executive, with the help of the Commission for Racial Equality, had last year asked health trusts to review their equality policies and practice.

"The starting point for all NHS employers is the annual priorities and planning guidance. This requires them to have a programme of action for ethnic minority staff."



Burning issue . . . Angry fishermen in Plymouth burn the EU flag in protest against the impact of Europe's common fisheries policy on the British fishing industry PHOTOGRAPH: BARRY BATCHELOR

Jails chief resigns over prisons policy

Heather Mills

DAVID WILSON, the highest high-flier in the Prison Service, has quit in protest at the "shameful" state of Britain's overcrowded jails.

He condemned the Home Secretary's "tabloid, short-term, prison works" criminal justice policy and warned that Britain was wasting billions of pounds on social failure.

As his resignation as head of prison officer and operational training reverberated around the prisons agency, Dr Wilson, aged 39, said: "I realise I have been making the indefensible work. My conscience could no longer allow it."

Dr Wilson appointed Britain's youngest governor at the age of 30, despaired when he saw that Albania was seeking to run a more humane system than Britain's. "They were talking about education and training, things we were cutting."

He listed the reasons for his departure as: the race to lock up increasing numbers in worsening conditions; the import of unproven gimmicks such as boot camps; the axing of young offender institutions, treatment programmes and education and the obsession with American-style security at the expense of humane treatment.

"There is no legal reason why we are now incarcerating 60,000 people — nearly a third more than we were four years ago . . . They are not violent offenders. It is overwhelmingly fine defaulters, minor property offenders and remand prisoners who will ultimately be given non-custodial sentences or found not guilty.

"They are in jail because the courts are responding to politicians talking up 'law and order' and creating a climate of fear."

Nor could Dr Wilson see any point in hanging on until May 1 in the hope of a Labour government, believing both parties are seeking to be "tough on crime".

What has been lost, he says, is a sensible debate about crime and punishment. "They go for the tabloid response that will help no one."

Anorexia on the rise among young children

Chris Mihill

CONSTANT messages about healthy eating are helping fuel a growing epidemic of eating disorders among young women, with children as young as six now judging each other by body shape, a specialist warned last week.

Advice on sensible diets was being mistranslated into additional pressure to be thin and beautiful — an image perpetuated by television and fashion magazines — and this was leading to more children, as well as young women, suffering from anorexia, said Bryan Lask.

Some mothers with anorexia were unwittingly starving their children because of their misperceptions about food, another specialist revealed.

Dr Lask, who runs a specialised eating disorders unit for children at Great Ormond Street hospital, London, said there were insufficient resources within the health service to treat the growing number of young people needing help. He told an international conference on eating disorders, in London, that when his unit started 13 years ago it saw two children with anorexia a year — now it sees four a week.

Preventive efforts had to be targeted at younger children. "What we need to do to prevent eating disorders is to teach kids to value things other than weight and shape, such as what sort of people they are."

Gerald Russell, of the Maudsley hospital, London, told the conference that one in three mothers with anorexia might be starving her children because of distorted images about how much food should be eaten. "It's not negligence — these women are caring," he said. "But their own abnormal concern gets transferred to the way they look after their children."

Canada takes sex abuse boy Britain 'did not protect'

Owen Bowcott

A 12-YEAR-OLD British boy has been granted refugee status by Canada on the unprecedented grounds that if he returns to Britain the authorities cannot be relied on to protect him from sexual abuse by his natural father.

The ground-breaking ruling by Ottawa's Immigration and Refugee Board caught the Foreign Office by surprise. It is the first time the Canadian authorities have offered asylum to anyone having a "well-founded fear of persecution in their homeland" on the grounds of incest.

The identity of the family has not been revealed. The mother is American. The father was described as a "British intelligence officer" who had worked for the United Nations in New York.

According to evidence presented to the board in Canada, the boy's father abused him from the age of two months. The American mother claimed that her ex-husband's family were alcoholics, of high social standing, who took photographs of the young child being interfered with while they were drunk.

The family had threatened to have her committed to a mental asylum if she pursued the allegations, the board's hearing was told. Documents shown to the panel allegedly revealed that the mother had approached her local social services department in London, the police child protection team and the Local Government Ombudsman.

The Immigration and Refugee Board panel found that the mother had kept "a thorough record" of her attempts to seek help from UK authorities and that her evidence of their failure to lend assistance was "credible".

After the couple separated the husband was allowed continued access to the boy. The child was abused repeatedly while on visits to his father until 1991, the panel heard.

The American woman remarried and went to live in Minnesota. Her new partner was deported two years later and she entered Canada, where she lodged a refugee claim in November 1994.

The Foreign Office said the allegations would be investigated. "We will be looking into whether there is any veracity in the claim that the boy's mother sought the assistance of the UK authorities unsuccessfully," a spokesman added.

It is believed to be the first time that any British citizen has ever sought asylum on such grounds.

The board's decision was not intended to brand the UK as a pariah nation with inadequate protection for child sex abuse victims. "The board is purely non-political and deals with every case on its merits."

John Gittings is optimistic about the future of China, and even of Hong Kong, as the British colony ponders what the future holds under its new Beijing masters

Chinese realities

WITH the death of the Great Architect, I shall never again — thank Deng — be asked: "Aren't the Chinese just pretending he's still alive?" As if Beijing's rumour sieve could have kept that sort of thing secret for more than 12 hours.

But the other two questions China specialists learn to dread are still around: (a) Will there be chaos in Hong Kong? (b) Do you like Wild Swans? (The answer to that is: yes, it is a really fascinating book, but it is not the only one about China.)

The answer to the first question, disappointingly for many inquirers, is: no, there will be choppy waves in the harbour, but no typhoon. Deng's death was also supposed to produce drama, if not crisis, within 24 hours. When it didn't, there was an instant sense of disillusion.

My greatest fear for Hong Kong is not that the People's Liberation Army will march in, taking pot-shots at pedestrians as casually as I saw it do in Beijing eight years ago. It is that nothing will seem to "happen", that the biggest story will be perceived to be that of 6,000 foreign journalists attending the June 30 ceremony — and then the world will switch off again.

From any perspective, the story of China — with Hong Kong attached to it — is hugely important and exciting. A fifth of mankind is heaving itself through a new transition, all the more fascinating because we don't know the final destination.

Hong Kong is now a special part of this story. It is being handed *back* — not handed *over* — to the nation from which it was sliced off a century and more ago. Hong Kongers are a jumble of mixed emotions: they will celebrate all night on June 30, though most are not quite sure why. Nostalgia for the British has faded as quickly as the last few colonnaded buildings have disappeared. But Chinese have never felt loyalty to the state — only to their nationality. Hong Kong Chinese have little reason to feel warm towards the awkward and ugly Communist party machine in Beijing.

The West has always preferred its China in black-and-white. The far-off land of superior wisdom in our age of enlightenment became the sick country of Asia in the age of imperialism. Chiang Kai-shek's China only became Washington's gallant ally after Pearl Harbour. Mao Zedong was briefly cast as a heroic peasant revolutionary — until the cold war, when he was labelled a Soviet puppet.

Western hostility drove China inwards and precipitated the Sino-Soviet split. Isolated and on the defensive, China was accused absurdly of being the "shadow behind Hanoi" in the Vietnam war, and of seeking to communise southeast Asia by force. Those who rejected these hostile stereotypes found it hard to avoid the opposite extreme, which was China as the revolutionary exemplar for the rest of the world. They became known as "110 per centers". For a while I could have been counted in the high 90s.

Roles were reversed when Deng Xiaoping took over after Mao's death. While Western socialists fretted over the unravelling of the Maoist model, Western capitalists applauded Deng's reforms and hailed the Chinese economic miracle.

The events of June 1989 forced governments that had previously belittled the Chinese democracy movement to pause and make some serious noises about human rights. This explains the Chris Patten phenomenon. Until then the British Foreign Office attitude had been, as one senior official told me: "If you're selling your house to someone, you don't suddenly paint it a colour the buyer doesn't like." But Governor Patten seriously screwed this up. It was not so much the details of Patten's plans for Hong Kong as the way he ignored the advice of Hong Kong Chinese officials and promoted them without making enough effort to win over Beijing. Commentators like myself, who applauded him at the start, must take some of the blame.

So human rights became an uneasy counterpoint to the dominant economic theme of relations between China and the West. But within three years Deng was back in favour with his economic miracle Mark II, which invited the whole country to adopt "capitalism with Chinese characteristics".

Overnight, in another media reversal, China was now proclaimed to be a new superpower about to take its rightful place in the world. The Butcher of Beijing became Man of the Year for Time magazine — and the Financial Times. Now the miracle is less impressive, and there is plenty of cheap labour elsewhere to assemble toys and computer chips for Western consumers.

No longer needed as a counterweight to the Soviet Union, China may be becoming too much of a superpower for safety. In Washington they are asking: will it be friend or foe? There is a similar dichotomy about Hong Kong's future: it's either a sell-out to communism or it's a joyous return to the motherland.

Most Hong Kongers, including leading democrats, are a good deal more realistic, fearing that China will damage the famous "stability and prosperity" more through ignorance than by intent.



Changing the guard . . . Chinese Major General Zhou Borong waves as he crosses the border, while Governor Chris Patten (below) reviews a Royal Navy honour guard earlier this month PHOTO: ANDREW WONG

Will the new chief executive, Tung Chee-hwa, learn quickly enough how to play off Hong Kong interests against Beijing — a game in which mainland provincial governors have had a lifetime of experience? Can Chinese officials refrain from regarding Hong Kong as a lucrative playground for their sons and entrepreneurial brothers-in-law?

Will Tung, and Beijing, have sufficient sense to stage the first post-handback elections next year so that democrats can win fairly in the one-third of seats which will still be directly elected? Can they refrain from meddling with freedom of speech and the Hong Kong media?

The new legislation proposed this month from Beijing will revive some, though not all, of the oppressive colonial laws that Britain belatedly scrapped. (If only it had been done sooner!) But the real question will be how these loosely worded ordinances are applied.

Proprietors with a new ruling élite to woo are more likely to hit problems of self-censorship than regulation. To the outside world, the fate of the highly visible South China Morning Post will be crucial. Under its present editor Jonathan Fenby (former editor of the Observer), it provides real balance. Its comment pages range from passionate critics of Beijing to members of Tung's new Executive Council. Its news coverage combines critical China-watching with sometimes uncritical reporting of Chinese claims. It may be in danger less through design than through accident. What happens if a veteran leader in Beijing takes offence at a cartoon or to an unflattering reference to his money-grubbing family? Will the Chinese foreign ministry withstand the pressure to teach the Post a lesson?

I hold to an optimistic, less dramatic view, which is that if Hong Kong can hold its own for a few years, changes within China as the post-Deng regime begins to liberalise will eventually narrow the disparity of values.

In China itself, stereotypes of all kinds make no sense. The "economic miracle" means nothing when you have seen scavengers at a railway station collecting plastic food boxes thrown out of train windows. Yet the forecasts of imminent break-up and the collapse of social order don't survive close inspection either: when I recently visited the home of the ancient philosopher Mencius, in Shandong, a student told me her ideal was to do a good job for society teaching children, and raise her own family in proper morality. Mencius would have been proud of her insistence on virtue.

Historical analogies with past divisions are misleading. Networks of trade, communications and shared interests criss-cross the country, breaking down old barriers. And the contrary view, that China will remain a politically ossified monolith for ever, also neglects real life. Magazines and TV stations now routinely expose social problems. There is a good chance that these new forces will join with the pent-up pressure for political reform within as well as outside the Communist party.

A few journalists based in China have shown that Beijing need not become a news ghetto, and some academic work in Britain and Australia grasps the new dimensions. Yet the rule remains that the larger the country, the more sweeping the generalisation.

And dissenting Chinese voices, brutally treated, get nothing like the support that Western governments used to bestow on their Soviet counterparts. Every year China is let off the hook at the UN Human Rights Commission because no major power is willing to take the lead. Yet some claims by human rights campaigners are so sweeping they give Beijing a pretext to brush off legitimate criticism. The TV exposé of the murderous neglect in a Shanghai orphanage was horrifying, but it is not official Beijing policy to dispose of orphans.

The Chinese activist Wang Dan, now serving a long jail sentence, wrote last year that the movement should shift from politics to social issues as the route towards change. Very few Chinese believe that their country will break up or that it is a model for market capitalism: but they still have faith that it can evolve. Whether they are right or not is the real China story, and we should not neglect it, even if there are no more Great Upheavals.

The British attitude had been: 'If you're selling your house to someone, you don't suddenly paint it a colour the buyer doesn't like.' But Patten seriously screwed this up. It was not so much the details as the way he ignored the advice of Hong Kong Chinese officials and promoted them without enough effort to win over Beijing

PHOTOGRAPH: ANAT GIVON

John Gittings's most recent book, Real China: From Cannibalism to Karaoke, is based on his journeys in the often-unreported central provinces (Pocket Books, £7.99)

Chirac plays his Maastricht ace

THE DECISION to call an early parliamentary election in France is a hard one for President Chirac. There is a clutch of good reasons for taking the step, but only if it succeeds. Either way, he is about to assume an entirely new dramatic character, that of a Gaullist president who dissolves the national assembly for the cause of Europe. Or, less kindly, he is doing it to upstage Chancellor Kohl.

An early election, it has always been understood under the Fifth Republic, should be called only in times of dire political crisis. Mr Chirac is saying in effect that the need to prepare France for European Monetary Union constitutes such an event. He may not be far wrong. The existing electoral timetable would result in the election being held just weeks before the selection of the first countries to qualify for EMU. It is now increasingly clear that France will meet convergence criteria only by making new cuts in public expenditure — or by raising new taxes. The government would naturally prefer to wield the axe after rather than before such an election, on the principle of elections first and austerity afterwards. Mr Chirac and his prime minister, Alain Juppé, will argue that, armed with a new mandate, they will be able to project France more forcefully at the Amsterdam summit this June. The French action could also be interpreted unsettlingly as a virtual referendum on policy towards Europe — not exactly a happy precedent for its partners.

It could be a referendum too on the president himself. Mr Chirac has performed a comprehensive U-turn since he fought and won his last election on pledges to fight unemployment and to heal France's "social fracture". Election promises, as he once joked, "only commit those who listen to them". Within months he had shifted to a strong commitment to EMU, and to the cuts and curbs that go with it. Mr Chirac's defence minister, Charles Millon, says that "no other president would take such a risk" — and he means it to be a compliment. The risk is also being taken by Mr Juppé: the polls suggest that the ruling centre-right coalition is bound to lose a significant number of seats. Yet there is some evidence that Mr Juppé himself has been urging the move. With his government in the doldrums and his public approval rating at a record low, he may benefit in perception if not votes by winning a new, even though reduced, mandate. For Mr Chirac the exercise could also serve to align the life-expectancy of the new parliament almost exactly with the presidency: the next elections for both would fall due in 2002 — with his own one coming conveniently first.

It is still a gamble. The Socialists say that they are ready, calling on the electors who only chose Mr Chirac on the second round not to give him a third chance. But their leader Lionel Jospin does not appear at ease in testing his alternative strategy in an election dominated by the Maastricht question. Any way round, it will be a critical contest for France — and could be equally so for Europe.

A squandered opportunity

THE UK GOVERNMENT is heading for electoral oblivion even though the economy, supposedly its trump card, is claimed to be in rude health. This bewilders ministers and some foreign pundits who attribute everything that's buzzing about Britain — including the renaissance of cooking and fashion — to 18 years of Tory rule. It is too early to give a final view on Thatcherism and its Majorite sequel, though history's judgment may be quite simple. A Squandered Opportunity.

Have they done anything right? Of course they have. They succeeded where previous Labour governments failed in reforming the labour markets, including pre-strike ballots and bans on secondary picketing. They invented privatisation, which was replicated around the world even though economists in the UK are still disputing the benefits. They reduced unemployment by fair means and foul, and by shifting the world to the right, they bequeath to Labour an unprecedented consensus in which the economic views of the two parties are eerily similar and in which the two sides of industry have declared a truce in the class war.

Whatever their successes at the micro level, the Conservatives have been unbelievably bad at running the macro-economy. Between 1980 and 1996 the economy grew by only 1.9 per cent a year compared with 2.1 per cent by other OECD countries in Europe. The Conservatives deserve to be judged by high standards for two reasons. First, they set their own criteria. They planned to raise economic growth by changing the entire culture of the country, including removing subsidies from the poor and reducing the tax burden on the rich. The extra growth did not happen and the poorest ended up worse off in real terms while the rich grew ever richer.

Second, their administration co-incided with fortuitous revenues from North Sea oil and planned ones from privatisation of nearly $300 billion. Instead of being used to transform the neglected infrastructure, they were frittered away on needless tax cuts and to finance unemployment that wouldn't have been so high had the revenues been better employed.

Twice during the 1980s the Government applied disastrous, and avoidable, macro-economic policies that resulted in two very steep recessions — shared by no other country — which raised unemployment and wantonly reduced industrial capacity. During the nineties they took the UK into the ERM at a ludicrously high exchange rate before it exploded in their face a few years later. Sure, there were highs, such as four years of growth averaging 4.5 per cent during the Lawson boom of the late 1980s, but Nemesis was never far behind and the negative growth that followed the booms dragged average growth down to under 2 per cent a year for the whole period. Even in areas where they were expected to be good — cutting the budget deficit and reducing inflation — they failed.

Will Labour do better? Tony Blair will have a far better economic legacy than previous Labour governments, but that doesn't mean it's good. He will inherit two ticking time bombs in the form of a grossly overvalued pound and an underlying budget deficit of $44 billion. The overvalued pound needs urgent attention if Britain is to avoid another cull of industry: yet within days of taking office the new government will face pressure from the Bank of England to *raise* interest rates, which could boost the pound further. Labour has some good micro-economic policies — the minimum wage and the utilities tax to raise money to put the unemployed back to work — but the fiscal background is extremely worrying.

A budget deficit of $44 billion when Britain should be heading towards a surplus during the fifth year of recovery means one thing. The next chancellor will have very little scope to increase spending and will come under intense pressure to raise taxes for entirely prudent reasons. The same applies to the Liberal Democrats, who have been brave enough to urge extra taxation. Only when Labour has sorted out this fiscal and exchange rate irresponsibility will it be able to think what it really ought to be doing. Some things never change.

Rogue fund manager costs bank $3m fine

Richard Miles

THE blue-chip City investment bank Morgan Grenfell was last week fined $3.2 million, the largest penalty ever imposed on a British financial institution, for its failure to control Peter Young, a rogue fund manager.

Imro, the investment watchdog, said the record fine reflected the number of investors affected, some 90,000 individual savers, and the amount of compensation involved, nearly $650 million.

Imro also disclosed that at least one Morgan Grenfell Asset Management director knew about the rogue activities of Mr Young for five months before the bank owned up to the scandal in its unit trust arm.

Until last week, the biggest fine was $1.2m against Invesco in 1993 for its part in the Maxwell pension scandal.

Morgan Grenfell's fine is twice the size expected by the City and a salutary warning to the unit trust management industry, which controls about $232 billion, half deposited by private investors.

The fine relates to three European investment funds under the control of Mr Young and one of his colleagues. On September 2 last year, Morgan Grenfell suspended the three funds for 72 hours after the discovery of serious "irregularities".

Mr Young was subsequently fired for gross misconduct and Deutsche Bank, Morgan Grenfell's German parent, was forced to bail out investors by pumping $290 million into the three funds to avoid massive withdrawals. Deutsche Bank also pledged $320 million in compensation.

Last week Imro revealed that Mr Young had broken City rules by channelling $260 million of savers' money into a secret network of companies registered in Luxembourg.

Phillip Thorpe, chief executive of Imro, said: "The management of Morgan Grenfell failed to control the operation of its business and ignored repeated warnings with severe financial results."

Mr Thorpe stressed that Imro would continue its investigation. Mr Young is also being investigated by the Serious Fraud Office.

Five directors, including chief executive Keith Percy, chief compliance officer Michael Wheatley and head of the unit trust business Graham Kane, have left the company since the scandal broke.

Morgan Grenfell's chief executive, Robert Smith, said first compensation cheques would be going out by the end of April. The funds affected are the European Growth Trust, European Capital Growth, and Europa.

Investors will be offered a choice of cash, or new units in the funds. Many of the 90,000 savers withdrew their money following reports of the scandal, wiping up to 40 per cent off the value of the funds, which at their peak attracted $2.2 billion.

Scandal mars Tory delight over jobs

Richard Thomas, Larry Elliott and Seumas Milne

FALLING unemployment and improving public finances gave the British Conservatives a much-needed double boost last week as they tried to shift the election focus from the party's internal divisions over Europe.

But their joy was short-lived as doubt was cast on the integrity of the jobs figures after the Guardian disclosed widespread falsification of job placement figures, and Jobcentre staff across the southeast of England identified their own offices as involved in routine fiddling.

Ministers said a 41,000 drop in the number of people out of work and claiming benefit to a 6½-year low and a Public Sector Borrowing Requirement more than $5 billion lower than the Budget forecast were further evidence that Britain was booming.

The Education and Employment Secretary, Gillian Shephard, said the figures showed more and more people were getting jobs and living standards were rising. "We now have by far the lowest unemployment rate of any major European country," she added.

Measured by benefit claimants, unemployment stands at 1,707,000 after falling by 480,000 in the past year and 318,000 in the past six months.

Among the Jobcentres alleged by employees to be involved in bogus job registration scams are those at Kingston, Twickenham and Hornchurch, London, and Stevenage, Hertfordshire.

An Education and Employment Department spokeswoman said disciplinary investigations were already taking place in several offices. The department would consider any evidence of fiddled jobs figures supplied by the civil service unions.

But Peter Hain, Labour's employment spokesman, accused Mrs Shephard, of "attempting to cover up the widespread evidence of rampant fiddling . . . It is clear that this is happening right across the country. What is needed now is a nationwide inquiry."

Last year the Government claimed it had helped 1.9 million unemployed people into work through its Employment Service. Civil service unions believe that hundreds of thousands of these are phantom placements, registered by Jobcentre staff to meet government targets.

Hundreds of thousands of jobs supposedly found for the unemployed by the government's Employment Service have in fact been "created" by fiddled figures, phantom placement scams and double-counting at Jobcentres across the country.

Employment Service staff and union officials say pressure to hit targets has led to widespread breaches of the rules and bogus job placements estimated at between 10 and 30 per cent of the total figure.

Paul Convery, director of the Unemployment Unit independent pressure group, described the scams as "target culture gone mad. Jobcentres are being forced to put their efforts into creating imaginary figures to hit their targets rather than helping the unemployed back into work."

A variety of methods is reported to have been used to boost the numbers recorded as having been found work. One is to register a placing — by entering a P against an unemployed person's name — after the individual has inquired after a vacancy. Another is to enter all the names of workers taken on by particular local firms as having been found work through the Jobcentre.

Even at this late stage, the Government is hoping that better job prospects will translate into political support. Data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) revealed that average earnings rose by 5 per cent in the year to March — the strongest growth rate for four and a half years — while job vacancies are at a record high.

An improving labour market has started to help repair the damage to the Government's finances. With tax receipts picking up, borrowing for the full 1996-7 financial year stood at $37.2 billion compared to a forecast of $42.8 billion made in last November's Treasury Red Book.

The ONS said unemployment had fallen in every region of the UK, and for both men and women. The unemployment rate dropped by 0.1 points to 6.1 per cent, down from 7.8 per cent a year ago.

However, Opposition parties disputed the validity of the jobs and earnings data, insisting that they had been made worthless by the multiple changes to the way joblessness was measured and the mis-reporting of vacancies by Jobcentres.



A statue of Robert Owen, founder of the Co-operative movement, stands guard outside the bank in Manchester PHOTOGRAPH: DON McPHEE

Co-op injunction foils bid

Roger Cowe

THE battle for control of the British Co-operative movement took an extraordinary turn last week when a last-minute injunction from the Co-operative Wholesale Society forced predator Andrew Regan to postpone the launch of his hostile $1.6 billion offer.

The court move was the latest development in a week which saw two senior CWS executives suspended for allegedly forging secret links with Galileo, a company headed by the 31-year-old entrepreneur Mr Regan and backed by offshore investors.

Lawyers for CWS showed the High Court photographic and video evidence to refute claims by one of the executives, Allan Green, that he had not met Mr Regan or his fellow director, David Lyons. The application for the injunction was also supported by affidavits from senior Co-op executives.

Galileo disclosed that it had been about to publish its long-awaited strategy for unlocking the multibillion pound value of the CWS. It had intended to make formal proposals for the conversion of the CWS into a limited company, so that Galileo could then make an offer for the mutual society.

But Galileo said it had been prevented from going public by the injunction and "regrets that the members of CWS, both individual and corporate, have for the time being been denied the opportunity to consider its proposals which it is confident would benefit members, employees, customers and the Co-operative movement as a whole".

Despite the CWS's determination not to deal with Mr Regan, he plans to appeal to members to turn the organisation into a conventional limited company. To achieve this, he would need to enlist the support of 10 members to call a special general meeting.

If he were to win the subsequent vote, the CWS would be sold to Galileo, giving members a windfall bonus similar to those from converting insurers and building societies. But there would be lengthy legal tussles before that happened.

The court order, sought by the CWS, which owns Co-op Bank, the CIS insurance company and several other businesses as well as its retail operations, forbids Mr Regan, Mr Green, Galileo or its parent company, Lanica, from using confidential CWS information. It also requires them to disclose all the information they have and what they have used it for, and to return all papers to the CWS.

On Tuesday a spokesman for Mr Regan said he would stand down as a director of Galileo as soon as the company is able to go public with its plans. It was seen in some quarters as the first sign of a crack between Mr Regan and his financial backers, led by Hambros merchant bank.

The Co-op insists that the injunction does not prevent Galileo going ahead with its long-awaited offer whether or not it goes to court to try to overturn the injunction. Even if it is not successful Galileo is expected to return with a formal offer for the whole of the CWS before the end of the month.

Sources suggested the injunction was merely a brief legal interruption that would make no substantial difference to Galileo's takeover plans.

In Brief

BRITISH TELECOM'S plans to capture a sizeable chunk of the $1,000 billion global telecoms market by the turn of the century were bolstered when the company won near-unanimous approval from its shareholders for a tie-up with the US group, MCI, in what is the biggest deal in UK corporate history.

SIX senior executives of the New Zealand Dairy Board have been arrested by UK Customs and Excise officers on charges of evading European Union tariffs on hundreds of tonnes of Anchor butter.

THE number of people across the world worth more than $1 million has tripled in 10 years and now tops 6 million, according to a report from US finance house Merrill Lynch.

APPLE Computer wallowed in red ink in the first three months of this year as the embattled company announced a loss of $708 million.

THE UK government has missed its election inflation goal of 2.5 per cent despite a fall in the target rate to 2.7 per cent, the lowest level for two years, according to data revealed by the Office for National Statistics.

ALLIANCE & Leicester shares ended their first day of trading at 566.5p, giving a potential windfall of more than £1,400 for the 2 million customers who hung on to their stock when the UK building society ended its mutual status.

CORDIANT, the advertising group founded by the Saatchi brothers, is poised to separate into three groups in an attempt to boost shareholder value and raise standards of service to clients.

GUINNESS is to launch its stout beer in Chile after signing a brewing and distribution agreement with Compania Cervecerias Unidas, which has an 88 per cent share of the nation's beer market.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates April 21	Sterling rates April 14
Australia	2.1050-2.1076	2.0811-2.0836
Austria	19.57-19.59	19.68-19.69
Belgium	57.39-57.59	57.58-57.63
Canada	2.2828-2.2850	2.2875-2.2896
Denmark	10.59-10.60	10.64-10.65
France	9.39-9.40	9.40-9.40
Germany	2.7816-2.7841	2.7951-2.7976
Hong Kong	12.66-12.67	12.57-12.58
Ireland	1.0496-1.0511	1.0503-1.0528
Italy	2,764-2,767	2,747-2,750
Japan	205.10-205.32	204.90-205.11
Netherlands	3.1272-3.1300	3.1420-3.1449
New Zealand	2.3542-2.3580	2.3432-2.3462
Norway	11.55-11.56	11.29-11.30
Portugal	280.28-280.55	279.22-279.51
Spain	235.15-235.35	235.20-235.41
Sweden	12.48-12.50	12.37-12.38
Switzerland	2.3678-2.3709	2.3814-2.3843
USA	1.6349-1.6363	1.6222-1.6231
ECU	1.4291-1.4307	1.4296-1.4309

FTSE100 Share Index up 77.0 at [illegible]. FTSE 250 Index up 12.4 at 4519.2. Gold down $4.60 at [illegible]

Le Monde

Opposition aims to break Algeria's silence

Marie-Claude Decamps in Madrid

THE Spanish group, Peace in Algeria, set up a meeting in Madrid on April 12-13 between representatives of Algerian opposition parties and the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). The aim of the meeting was "to break the silence", combat "disinformation" and promote "a dialogue with the political forces that are in favour of a peaceful solution".

The event was attended by most of the parties and personalities present at the Rome forum of January 1995, where a "national contract" aimed at achieving a negotiated political solution in Algeria was signed.

The main issue under discussion was whether to take part in the Algerian general election, scheduled for June 5. Opinions were divided. The FIS (outlawed in Algeria since 1992) called on other participants to boycott the poll. The Movement for Democracy in Algeria, led by the former Algerian president Ahmed Ben Bella, will not take part.

But the Trotskyist Workers' Party has decided to throw its hat into the ring. "I know that the elections will be rigged and that they won't bring an end to the war that is tearing the country apart," said Louisa Hanoune, the party's secretary-general, who was twice jailed during the presidency of Chadli Bendjedid.

"I realise that the election campaign will be full of risks and littered with obstacles," she added. "The National Democratic Rally, a party the regime set up two months ago, is well financed and has offices everywhere, whereas we'll only be authorised to hold meetings a few hours before they are due to take place — which means they can't be organised properly. Our phones are tapped and cut off on the slightest pretext.

"But I'm convinced we must take part. People are encouraging us because they feel less abandoned, and because it's a way, however ineffectual, of getting their message across."

For Hanoune, combating disinformation also means talking about the people who have been killed. "Not just those allegedly killed by the GIA [Armed Islamic Group] — or rather, the group thought to be the GIA in the present state of chaos, where nothing resembles an armed man in plain clothes as much as another armed man in plain clothes," she added.

Abdenour Ali Yahya, president of Algeria's Human Rights League, which opposes the government, told the meeting that 35,000 people were in Algerian jails, 100,000 had been killed and thousands more had disappeared.

This was the result, he said, of policies pursued by President Liamine Zeroual and the so-called "eradication" faction, who believe a heavy security clampdown will eventually lead to a "peace of cemeteries". He denounced the systematic use of torture, and said FIS activists repatriated from other countries had been "tortured or eliminated".

The meeting concluded that "the conditions for dialogue should be created". Ben Bella said: "We can vote 40 times but it won't change anything. The army must get out."

Ali Yahya argued that it was a question of choosing not between the lesser of two evils, but between dictatorship and democracy. How did he think a dialogue could get under way? "By bringing together all the political forces that want peace, including the FIS, of course."

The advantage, Hanoune and Ben Bella argued, would be that the GIA would be stripped of its political veneer and become isolated, because terrorism would no longer be confused with Islamism.

Spokesman in exile for the FIS, Brussels-based Abdelkrim Ould Adda, said: "We've suffered from events in Iran, Afghanistan and Sudan. We Islamists have been turned into bogymen."

He denied that the attitude of FIS activists towards the GIA was ambiguous. "The Islamic Salvation Army [the military wing of the FIS] is an organised and disciplined military force with a political will," he said. "The GIA is made up of extremists, criminals and those in military security who manipulate them. We condemn all acts of violence, whether in Algeria or abroad, which affect civilians and innocent people. The moment we are offered a peaceful, lasting and fair solution, we will co-operate.

"I deplore the fact that Zeroual has not been subjected to the kind of international pressure that was put, for example, on Haiti. But I'm pleased to note that the French, who have supported the present regime, are beginning to look at the situation from a different angle."

(April 15)

Can Belgium pull together?

COMMENT
Luc Rosenzweig

BELGIUM has just gone through the most intense nine months of its political, economic and social history since the end of the war — a period that may prove as crucial to its future as that of the seventies, when clashes between French- and Dutch-speaking communities put the country on the road to federalisation.

Belgium has been left deeply traumatised by three events: an economic crisis that has led to swingeing redundancies in Wallonia's steel industry and even in reputedly dynamic Flanders; the revelation of scandals in political party funding and Mafia-like practices in the Walloon Socialist party; and the discovery last year that several children had been systematically kidnapped, raped and murdered by paedophiles.

The 300,000 people who marched in silent protest through the streets of Brussels last October were making two demands: First, they wanted the government to reveal the truth about the shortcomings of institutions that were supposed to protect the country's citizens. And second, they called for steps to be taken to prevent such tragic errors from occurring again.

The first of those two demands has been met by the report published on April 15 by the parliamentary commission of inquiry, which was set up last November to look into the paedophile scandal.

The report is a damning indictment of how investigations into the child kidnappings were bungled by magistrates and officers in both the gendarmerie and the police — rival forces, whose merger the report recommends.

The commission went to great lengths to get to the truth. It took the risk of operating openly, in full view of television cameras and the public, except when the protection of individuals required the hearings take place in camera.

The risk paid off, for at no time did the proceedings, which lasted 351 hours, degenerate into political mud-slinging between the members of the ruling coalition and the opposition.

But the difficult part is still to come. Will the government implement the reforms advocated by the report and take action against those charged with failing in their duties?

The "Belgian system" is characterised by an abdication of responsibility, a failure to punish incompetence, and an extreme form of parochialism that encourages people in one village to take no interest in what goes on in the next.

Any action taken will require a thorough shake-up of the political ethos, which relies on compromise and an "easy does it" approach to clashes between interests and people. This ethos has enabled a nation that is deeply divided — culturally and politically — to survive repeated upheavals.

The price paid for that civil peace has been a steady decline of central authority. Gradually robbed of its powers by regional bodies, the government allowed an esprit de corps to take root in various institutions that gave police and magistrates the feeling that they could act as they wished without fear of retribution.

While it is easy to take apart the state, which is supposed to guarantee the individual against the abuses of corporate bodies, it is much more difficult to put it back together again and, more crucially, to give it the credibility it needs to be able to act.

(April 17)

Female agents tortured by secret service

Nicole Bonnet in Lima

THE long-running hostage crisis in Lima was recently pushed off the front pages of Peruvian newspapers by two other events: the torture of a woman military intelligence officer by her colleagues, and the discovery of the dismembered body of another woman agent working for the same service.

Sergeant Leonor La Rosa, aged 36, was tortured for a week in the basement of the defence ministry, known locally as the Pentagonito (little Pentagon). Fellow officers suspected she had been responsible for leaks that enabled the press to expose two undercover operations aimed at intimidating opponents of President Alberto Fujimori, among them a journalist, Cesar Hildebrandt, and a retired general, Rodolfo Robles.

After being arrested on February 11 and tortured, La Rosa was eventually transferred to a military hospital. On April 6 she described her experiences in a television interview. She named her torturers and denied all responsibility for the leaks she had been accused of.

Four members of military intelligence — its head, Colonel Carlos Sanchez Noriega, Lieutenant-Colonel José Salinas, Major Percy Sakedo and Major Ricardo Anderson — have since been charged with misuse of authority by a military court, which also charged their victim with disobedience and disloyalty.

La Rosa was more fortunate than her colleague, Mariella Barreto, whose mutilated body was found on March 30. The dead woman was a former lover of Major Martin Rivas, father of her four-year-old daughter and operational head of Grupo Colina, a death squad that hit the headlines in 1992 for the massacre of 30 people suspected of subversive activity at Lima's La Cantuta university and in the Barrios Altos neighbourhood of the capital.

Emotions are now running high, even among the deputies in the majority party, who are not normally critical of the government or of the army. When members of parliament called for a commission of inquiry to be set up, the defence minister, General Tomas Castillo, told them to mind their own business.

The row has coincided with assaults on a number of leading personalities, among them Javier Diez Canseco, a leftwing member of parliament and human rights champion, Gustavo Saberbein, who was finance minister under President Alan García, and Blanca Rosales, editor of the opposition newspaper La Republica. The authorities claim the attacks were the work of delinquents.

On April 8, a journalist, Ginés Barrios, was kidnapped and tortured after claiming that government funds had been misappropriated. He was released on April 12, the day after a former military intelligence officer, José Bazan, who had links with Grupo Colina, was arrested after confirming the nature of the group's activities and denouncing the infiltration of secret service agents into the civil service at both national and regional levels.

(April 16)

Black power in the politics of business

Ramaphosa was once Mandela's heir, now he pursues profit, writes **Frédéric Chambon** in Johannesburg

THE Sowetan, the daily that caters to South Africa's black community, believes that "the real power is economic". Cyril Ramaphosa, former political luminary and now emblematic leader of the black business community (and part-owner of The Sowetan), has taken that as his personal motto.

The reason he crossed over from politics to business a year ago was that he wanted to tackle the major challenges facing South Africa over the next few years: the problem of economic power-sharing and the living conditions of a black population losing patience with the slow pace of change.

"I used to be in the business of politics; now I'm in the politics of business. But my aim remains the same: how to improve life for blacks in this country," says Ramaphosa, the deputy chairman of New Africa Investments Limited (Nail), South Africa's biggest black business group, which was set up by President Nelson Mandela's former doctor, Nthato Motlana.

In 1994, the black population swept Mandela to power in South Africa's first democratic election, which brought the apartheid era to a close. Now they want their slice of the action in the economy, which is still mainly controlled by whites.

Ramaphosa's conversion to the business world marked a turning point in the country's economic and political life, as could be seen from the coverage it got from the media. Ramaphosa's office sports neatly framed front-page splashes of the event.

His influence in business milieux is proportional to the political stature he acquired during the fight against apartheid and the building of the "new" South Africa. The white establishment against which he used to exercise his considerable skills as a negotiator has welcomed him with open arms.

As a young anti-apartheid activist in the early eighties, Ramaphosa created a miners union and turned it into the spearhead of the protest movement against the regime. He succeeded in getting white employers to recognise his union while at the same time helping to set up the Congress of South African Trades Unions, a powerful body linked with Mandela's then-banned African National Congress (ANC).

Ramaphosa says he is proud to "have enabled miners, who used to be treated like the lowest of the low, to gain recognition as human beings in their own right".

The powerful mining companies that Ramaphosa gave such a rough ride to in the past apparently bear no grudge against him. Indeed, it was Anglo American, South Africa's biggest mining company, that enabled him to bring off his first big business coup. Last August it sold control of one of its subsidiaries, Johnnic, to a consortium of black businessmen, led by Ramaphosa.

What has brought these former adversaries together is the fact that Ramaphosa is now seen as a moderate. He played a key role in the talks between anti-apartheid movements and the white government that enabled South Africa to make a peaceful transition to democracy in 1994.

Ramaphosa, described by Mandela as "one of the most brilliant leaders of his generation", became a leading architect of the new South Africa. As president of the Constitutional Assembly, he played a key role in drawing up the constitution.

"That marked the climax of our fight against apartheid, and it was an honour for me to have taken part in it," Ramaphosa says, with just a touch of bitterness. Far from marking yet another step in his meteoric rise in public affairs, the adoption of the constitution spelt the end of his political career.

Because of his popularity in the townships and the trust he inspired in the white minority, he had been tipped by many as the ideal successor to Mandela at the 1999 presidential elections. But his great rival within the ANC, Thabo Mbeki, succeeded in imposing himself within the party and the government as the president's anointed heir. Mandela himself seemed to prefer Mbeki, since he gave Ramaphosa no post in the government that he reshuffled just before the constitution was adopted.

"That's politics," Ramaphosa says with a sigh. His exit from politics was a deliberate act, although Mandela tried to play it down. Today he has no regrets: "I love my job. Business is all about negotiating — just what I like. It's much more exciting than politics. You can really get things done."

Ramaphosa has great ambitions as a businessman. The deputy chairman of Nail and boss of Johnnic, he also sits on the boards of 10 or so other companies and has just been admitted to the management committee of the Johannesburg stock exchange.

A chubby-faced bearded man in his mid-forties, Ramaphosa uses charm and warmth to achieve his ends. Someone who did business with him recently says he has an extraordinary knack of making you feel good just as the battle is about to be lost — as it always is with him.

The scale of the Johnnic operation, which he masterminded, enabled black business to make a great leap forward. Within a few months, the number of black-controlled companies listed on the Johannesburg stock exchange more than doubled. Yet they still only account for 10 per cent of the total.

Ramaphosa puts that figure in perspective by pointing out that the Afrikaners, after taking power in 1948, took almost 30 years to reach the same level. The fact remains that 80 per cent of the South African economy is still in the hands of five huge conglomerates controlled by the white minority.

For black business to progress, it needs loans from white financiers. In most cases the finance takes the form of sell-offs at a discount, as with Johnnic, by big white businesses trying to curry favour with the black regime and thus forestall any possibility that control of the economy might be taken from them.



Matters are not helped by the fact that black businesses rarely act in concert, and there is often a spirit of fierce rivalry. Ramaphosa managed to bring together the various bidders for Johnnic into a single consortium. But when it came to the final negotiations there were rumbles of discontent at the predominant role he had played.

Ramaphosa himself was miffed when a rival black group took control of the mining company JCI, another Anglo American subsidiary, which the conglomerate did not want to fall into his hands because it judged him too greedy. "It doesn't matter — I've got my eye on something much better than JCI," he says.

The various organisations that are supposed to represent the black business community have failed to agree on the composition of a delegation to go on a foreign trip with Mandela — to the president's great irritation. Mbeki also recently criticised black business people for acting like "parasites" and making profits from existing business operations instead of creating jobs and growth.

Blacks often claim that black business is more interested in making a fast buck than in bringing economic benefits to their community, which includes 80 per cent of the country's 4 million jobless.

Ramaphosa takes such criticism on board — Johnnic is a holding company with a portfolio of investments in other companies — even when it comes from an old political rival: "Mbeki is right. In my view, the establishment of a sound financial base is only a first stage. We now need to invest in factories so as to create jobs. This will be the challenge of the next few years. We must create growth and employment so the black majority's living conditions can truly change."

For all his protestations to the contrary, Ramaphosa's stint in the business world could serve as a springboard were he to decide to return to politics and stand as president in 1999. Johnnic has a stake in a powerful press group which, when the time comes, could play a useful role in putting his message across to voters. "I'm just fine where I am" is all he will say for the moment. But he does not sound all that convincing. At 44, the man Mandela once saw as his successor still has plenty of time to elbow his way back into the political limelight.

(April 15)

China exploits competition for arms trade

Jacques Isnard in Beijing

"THE Chinese will go on squeezing the Russians for all they're worth, as they've been doing since 1993, and they'll do it until Western hi-tech becomes available," says a close collaborator of the French defence minister, Charles Millon. He has just spent five days in China, where he met not only his opposite number but, unusually, President Jiang Zemin and the prime minister Li Peng.

Paris and Beijing are trying to revive their co-operation on security matters, which ended after the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989. The French face two obstacles: an increasingly dynamic Russian presence, and the embargo on the delivery of military equipment that the European Union imposed on its members after Tiananmen — and which the Chinese are openly trying to circumvent or get lifted.

Within the framework of barter transactions, Moscow is supplying Beijing with military equipment in exchange for a wide range of Chinese goods, from textiles to ore. The French suspect that Russian advisers are secretly helping China to modernise its nuclear arsenal in the area of rocket propulsion.

That aid could extend to the development of explosive materials through the sale of two civilian reactors — due to be installed in Jiangsu province — which may not be subject to the controls that ban the use of nuclear power for military purposes.

Russian aid will, by 2005, provide China with a new generation of intercontinental missiles — with a range of 12,000km — that could threaten Europe and the United States.

As regards conventional weapons, the Russians have just sold the Chinese 60 Su-27 Sukhoi fighters and licensed them to manufacture the airframe and avionics, which means they will be able to assemble 200-300 planes of the same model.

But according to French experts, Russia does not intend to sell China the licence of the Su-27's jet engine. This is where French industry hopes to step in: last September Snecma, designer of the Rafale fighter's M88 engine, was given the go-ahead by the French government to check out the Chinese market. But it was not authorised to start negotiations, let alone exports.

Although this does not necessarily mean France has changed its policy on arms sales, it does suggest a certain ambiguity in its relations with China. In Beijing, Millon reiterated the key elements of French government policy, which are openness, a step-by-step approach, and observance of current international and European obligations.

Only a new consensus by the EU's 15 members could lift the military embargo on China. To judge from the widely differing attitudes among member states on the issue of human rights in China, the question of arms sales would inevitably provoke equally sharp divisions.

The French government says it does not want to "tie the hands" of its arms industry in the face of competition from the United States and Italy. That is why it gave the green light to the export of "anything that does not constitute a weapons system, in the literal sense of the word, but which may be a piece of non-offensive military equipment", such as air surveillance radar and communications systems.

France will authorise the sale of dual-purpose equipment (which may be put to either civilian or military use), such as transport helicopters and jet engines. It remains to be seen whether the M88 engine falls into that category, though other engines, such as the RB-199 used in the German-Italian-British Tornado jet, will certainly be in the running.

"French industry has plenty on its plate until such time as the political situation in China stabilises," says one of Millon's aides, who believes there will probably not be any "military overtones" to President Jacques Chirac's visit to China next month, which is seen as essentially political and economic.

But Beijing knows time is on its side. It hopes to exploit the fierce competition between its possible suppliers, which will prompt them to put pressure on their governments to allow them to meet China's requirements.

(April 13-14)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

The Washington Post

Albania's Rebels Wary of Peace Force

Jonathan C. Randal in Vlore

HIS FAWNING lieutenants call him "the Sultan." The local constabulary's deputy chief suggests he runs Vlore's "second police headquarters." For his part, Ramazan Causchi, a onetime jailbird who heads a ragtag militia tolerated by what is left of this Albanian city's authorities, was out of sorts.

He rose abruptly from the bottle-strewed table. His chattering associates fell silent as he grabbed an AK-47 Kalashnikov assault rifle, tightened the straps on his camouflage flak jacket and strode out of the harbor-side Hotel Bologna.

Soon he was back, however, glowering among his men and pondering their fate and that of the revolutionary committee that early last month sprang up here in Albania's second-largest port and set off a chain reaction of defiance to President Sali Berisha's rule in the southern third of Albania.

There was reason for worry: For Causchi, an ill-shaved, muscular man in his early 30s who likes to be called Zani, and for Vlore's 180,000 other inhabitants, suddenly times are changing — and not necessarily to their advantage. If the international peace force that started flowing into Albania last week does its job, the revolutionary committees here and elsewhere — along with militias like Causchi's — will be forced to disband.

An Italian minesweeper has anchored just beyond the dock, a jumping-off point long notorious for smugglers running drugs, prostitutes and cigarettes to Italy. The minesweeper's presence signals that soon a company of Greek soldiers and a brigade of Italians will be taking up positions in Vlore as part of the Italian-led, eight-nation European mission.

The force is limited to safeguarding humanitarian-aid shipments, but Causchi's sour mood reflected widespread fears that Berisha will somehow manipulate the 6,000-member multinational force into disarming the citizenry and dissolving the revolutionary committees before meeting their demands for free and fair elections and creation of a new government.

Mass media . . . Residents of Vlore digest the latest news in the morning papers PHOTO: DIETHER ENDLICHER

Elections have been set for June 29. But across southern Albania, government institutions still function at half-speed or not at all. And the armed groups and local committees that arose during last month's chaos still wield a lot of power — or try to.

"We're here to defend Vlore and all the south with the committee and the people," said Causchi's lieutenant, Zini Harouni, as he waved a beer bottle in a visitor's face in the hotel bar. "Protecting humanitarian aid is fine, but as Zani says, if the multinational force tries to disarm us, we will plant computer-controlled mines and bombs of nitroglycerin all the way to Bari" — in Italy, on the opposite shore of the narrow Adriatic Sea.

Even without such threats, the European force never seriously considered shouldering the task of collecting as many as 500,000 weapons that pro- and anti-Berisha forces seized from government arsenals last month.

But Causchi's men fear the foreign military presence will turn them into odd men out. So far, his men have proved to be useful, if unconventional, adjuncts to the police on one hand and the revolutionary committee on the other.

The three — police, committee and militia — are united by little more than a shared fear of Berisha and his local agents, a situation that has led many citizens to conclude that no one is in charge.

Even Kastriot Karabolli, the deputy police chief, criticized the president for breaking down the institutional distance between the police and Berisha's Democratic Party gunmen. A visit by the president seems far-fetched in Vlore, but Karabolli warned, "If Berisha came here I'd get killed."

The best the police and the committee can hope for is the calming presence of the multinational European force.

"When the Italians and Greeks [of the] multinational force get here," said Albert Shuti, the suave, long-haired secretary general of the rebel committee largely made up of Vlore's civilians, "law and order will improve and Zani's men will be neutralized."

"Do we look like the rebels and criminals Berisha claims we are?" he asked, speaking of the 35 members of the committee. "Berisha and his bandits want to liquidate us physically," he said. "Frankly, I'm only 36, and I don't trust any party. I don't even trust in God."

That was why, he said, the committee would remain in existence until Berisha accepts free and fair elections, and agrees to proportional representation and equal access to government-controlled radio and television, and until a new government is sworn in.

The committee's humility is based on hard facts. As Karabolli remarked, "if the committee disappeared tomorrow, it would make absolutely no difference."

He admitted he is annoyed that the committee has renewed its advice to citizens that they retain purloined arms, despite his own repeated attempts to get the weapons handed in.

Big Fallout From FBI Lab Report

EDITORIAL

THE IMMEDIATE problem for the Justice Department following the release last week of its inspector general's report on the FBI laboratory is damage control.

It is a certainty that a substantial number of people convicted, in part, on the basis of evidence processed by the lab will seek new trials. It is a sure thing that lawyers handling appeals in cases that are still active, such as the World Trade Center bombing, will have new ammunition in arguing for reversals. And it is already clear that the prosecutors in the Oklahoma City case have been severely hampered as a result of errors made by lab examiners.

The department, and the report itself, confidently claim that no real harm has been done, that errors did not affect the outcome of trials and that none of the FBI personnel actually broke the law. We are not at all confident that these assurances are justified.

Even more troubling, though, are institutional problems revealed in the report. These include the failure of oversight, sloppy record-keeping, inadequate training programs and administrative foul-ups highlighted by the report.

To the genuine surprise of judges, lawyers — including the defense bar — forensic scientists not affiliated with the lab, crime writers, moviegoers and others who have some familiarity with the criminal justice system, this institution is not at all the infallible paragon it was advertised and believed to be.

While many of the personnel have impressive academic credentials in the sciences, many others — including those who testify in court — have none except for in-house courses and experience as field investigators.

Moreover, some of those implicated in the report appear to have no compunction about tailoring their scientific findings to fit the evidence gathered against a particular defendant. Nor have they been reluctant, according to the report, to testify confidently about matters far beyond their competence. Mistakes were not only ignored, they were sometimes rewarded.

These are the kinds of problems that won't be corrected by an administrative reorganization. They go to the culture of the institution, the perhaps unconscious bias of the examiners toward the prosecution and the disinclination of supervisors to hold personnel to a high, truly scientific standard.

It is no overstatement to say that public confidence in the government's premiere forensic experts has been undermined. That is bound to have a continuing impact on jury behavior and the entire criminal justice system.

Rocky Road Leads to Netanyahu's Crisis

Barton Gellman in Jerusalem

ON JANUARY 10, to the consternation of assembled ministers, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sprang the announcement that he was ready to fill the vacant attorney general's post. He insisted there must be cabinet confirmation on the spot.

Most of the ministers said they had never heard of the candidate, a criminal lawyer named Roni Bar-On. Those who said they did know him, according to a leaked transcript of the cabinet meeting and interviews with five of those in the room, voted against the appointment or abstained.

Within two days, before he could be sworn in, Bar-On had withdrawn from the post in a hail of public criticism. But the story behind the failed appointment, full of hardball bargaining and alleged deals, has brought Netanyahu to the brink of downfall.

The story has its roots in Israel's complex coalition politics. Although Netanyahu was elected by direct ballot, he cannot govern without a majority in the 120-seat parliament. His own Likud Party controls 32 seats. To reach his working majority of 66, he recruited 34 votes from five other parties in an alliance of ideology and convenience.

Netanyahu found his largest additional bloc in the 10 seats controlled by Aryeh Deri's Shas, an ultra-Orthodox Jewish party. Deri acquired the power to make or break Netanyahu by depriving him of a working majority at will.

Deri also had severe legal problems, having been under investigation or trial for seven years on corruption charges that have yet to be resolved. The central allegations of the current scandal revolve around Deri's relationship to the appointment of Bar-On as attorney general.

According to witnesses emerging in a three-month police probe, Deri was intimately involved in the appointment. The probe began shortly after Israel Television reported on January 22 that Deri pushed for Bar-On as part of a deal to bring him lenience in his trial.

Before Deri could put Bar-On in the job, he had to quash the candidate whom Netanyahu has described as his first choice: Dan Avi-Yitzhak, one of Israel's leading criminal lawyers, who happened to be Deri's own chief counsel in the corruption trial.

Avi-Yitzhak, who then had a bitter falling out with Deri, has since accused him of attempting to force the appointment of Bar-On.

Hanegbi, in turn, took the lead in promoting Bar-On in the cabinet. He described him as "for decades one of Israel's foremost criminal lawyers" and strongly implied that the Supreme Court's chief justice, who objected strongly to Bar-On's candidacy in a private meeting, "welcomed the appointment."

Netanyahu's defense lawyer, hired after the prime minister was interrogated as a suspect in February, has since said his client knew little about Bar-On and relied on Hanegbi to select a man for the post. In the cabinet, Netanyahu carried the debate over reluctant ministers, arguing that Bar-On "has the qualifications and he has the background."

Police proposed indictments against four men. Deri would be charged with extortion; Hanegbi and Lieberman, the chief of staff, with fraud and breach of trust; and Netanyahu also with fraud and breach of trust. The police acknowledged that their case relies heavily on one "central witness," identified by Israeli news organizations as Avi-Yitzhak.

Tobacco Firms Negotiate Settlement

John Schwartz
and Saudra Torry

AFTER decades of fighting any attempt to hold them liable for the health effects of smoking, the nation's major tobacco companies are negotiating a possible settlement that would compensate smokers and taxpayers in exchange for protection against lawsuits.

With active encouragement from the White House, RJR Nabisco Holdings Corp. and Philip Morris Inc., the two largest tobacco companies, have been negotiating a proposal that calls for companies to pay hundreds of billions of dollars to create a fund to cover settlements with states, private individuals and others suing cigarette companies. The industry also would accept unprecedented restrictions on advertising and marketing.

In exchange, the industry would be protected from nearly all current and future lawsuits by setting a limit on the industry's legal liability once and for all, an amount that could be $300 billion or more. Part of that payout would go to smokers claiming damages from the industry, and part would go to reimburse 22 states suing the industry to recover tobacco-related health care expenses.

The agreement as currently discussed would also hold the companies to the spirit of Food and Drug Administration regulations to curb underage smoking, while limiting the ability of the agency to widen its regulatory program.

"This is the first time they have, literally, sat across the table," said Hubert H. Humphrey III, Minnesota's attorney general and a participant in the discussions.

While the negotiations, which began on April 3, are historic, their outcome is far from certain. Any deal resulting from the negotiations, first reported on Wednesday last week in the Wall Street Journal, would require the consent of Congress by passage of a federal law.

And the plan faces opposition from some state attorneys general and others. Opposition mounted last week to the possible settlement, as critics charged that the deal was too soft on big tobacco.

After reports of the negotiation lifted stock prices for tobacco companies — with prospects for even greater jumps if a deal is struck — Humphrey said companies "shouldn't be making money on this business".

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi said that he had been briefed on the negotiations: "I know the parameters of what they've been talking about. I don't know the status over the last couple of weeks". Lott has said he would work with a proposal were one brought to him.

According to sources familiar with the negotiations, the industry representatives have been willing to accept restrictions on advertising that even go beyond those called for by the FDA. The agency would ban tobacco billboards within 1,000 feet of schools or playgrounds; the industry has said it would drop billboard advertising as well as ad campaigns like the Marlboro Man and Joe Camel.

In return, the companies are asking that the FDA's jurisdiction over tobacco products as "drug delivery devices" be nullified. Industry officials have long contended that FDA jurisdiction is the beginning of backdoor prohibition that could lead to further restrictions on tobacco products, including a gradual ratcheting-down of nicotine levels to render the products non-addictive. The FDA has consistently denied that prohibition is its goal, but did reserve the right to pursue more stringent measures if its goals for reducing underage smoking are not met.

Thus one proposal being floated in the talks would rename the agency the "Food, Drug and Tobacco Administration" to make clear that its authority over tobacco does not equate to that over drugs and to remove the threat that it may one day try to outlaw cigarettes entirely.

The negotiations come as the industry faces a number of legal challenges. The tough new FDA regulations aimed at reducing smoking by young people have begun to go into effect. The lawsuits by 22 states against the industry are all heading toward courtrooms around the country, as are a number of suits by individuals and classes of smokers claiming tobacco-related injury.

In addition, the Liggett Group, the smallest major tobacco company, recently announced its own settlement that could strengthen many of those attacks. The company admitted that the industry targets young people and that its products are both addictive and cause fatal illnesses. Liggett also made internal documents available that the company says proves those contentions — not just for Liggett, but for the entire industry.

Gingrich Takes Loan From Dole

John E. Yang

HOUSE SPEAKER Newt Gingrich, R-Georgia, said last week he will pay the $300,000 penalty the House levied against him for violating ethics rules by accepting a loan from a surprising source — Bob Dole, his onetime rival as leader of congressional Republicans.

"I have a moral obligation to pay the $300,000 out of personal funds," Gingrich told the House in a 20-minute speech announcing his startling decision. "Therefore, as a person of limited means, I have arranged to borrow the money . . . and to personally pay it back . . . Any other step would simply be seen as one more politician shirking his duty and one more example of failing to do the right thing."

As he has in the past, Gingrich sought to limit his own culpability. "To the degree I have made mistakes, they have been errors of implementation but never of intent," he said.

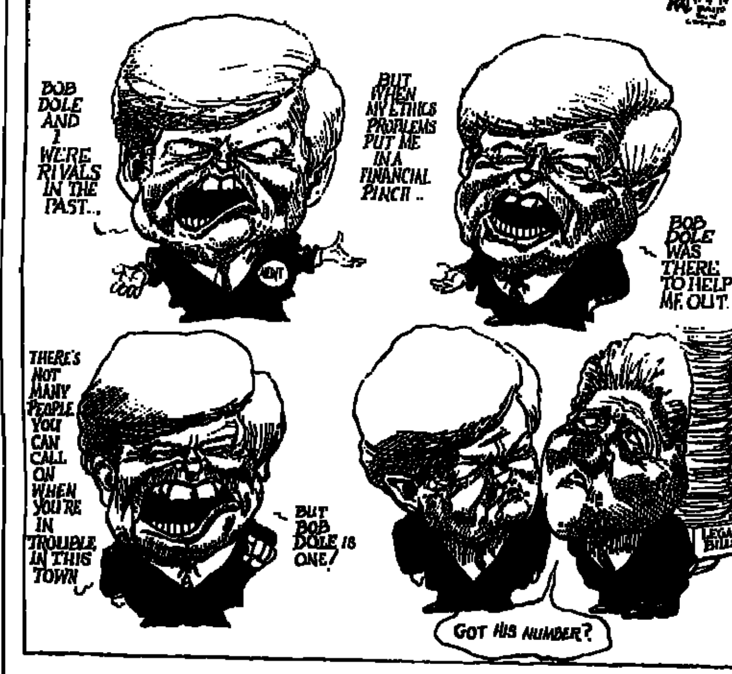
Dole offered to make the loan, for which Gingrich will pay 10 percent interest. But neither the principal nor the accrued interest is due until the end of the eight-year loan period, when the combined total would be $643,000. Gingrich has said he would leave Congress by January 3, 2003.

The agreement also specifies that Dole cannot forgive the loan and that the loan would be replaced with a commercial bank loan if Dole ever becomes a registered lobbyist.

In addition, the loan documents will include collateral and will specify that Gingrich will not use contributions from others to repay the loan, J. Randolph Evans, the speaker's ethics attorney, told reporters.

Evans said the loan terms met the House rule's standard of being comparable to a commercial bank loan, but some House Democrats questioned whether the terms were preferential. The House ethics committee is reviewing the terms.

"What average American could walk into their local bank — take out a commercial loan for $300,000 with no collateral and no payments due until 2005?" asked House Minority Whip David E. Bonior, D-Michigan, Gingrich's most ardent House critic. "And on top of that, he wants to borrow the money from a former politician who recently signed on with one of the largest lobbying firms in Washington." Dole will join the law firm of Verner, Liipfert, Bernhard, McPherson and Hand next month.



Dole said he is making the loan both out of friendship and to keep the Republican Party strong. "I wanted to help the Republicans and help Newt Gingrich get this behind him and behind the party and move ahead with the political agenda," he told reporters outside his downtown office. Dole said the money will come from personal savings. "I've been working for a long time," he said. "Saved some money."

Gingrich chose to accept Dole's offer rather than going to a bank to avoid questions of whether the lending institution was giving him preferential treatment. "If we went to a bank, no matter what happened, my guess was we'd get ethics complaints down the road that there was favoritism," Evans said.

By resolving the question of the $300,000 penalty, described as a reimbursement for part of the House ethics committee's expenses in investigating the allegations against Gingrich, the speaker is seeking to remove himself as a central issue for congressional Republicans.

"This moves the agenda away from Newt Gingrich to policy," said Rich Galen, communications director for the GOP House campaign committee and a longtime Gingrich aide. "There's a lot of happiness it's obviously coming to a conclusion," said Rep. Mark Foley, R-Florida. "It's a big relief."

Gingrich's announcement — all the more remarkable because its most surprising component did not leak to reporters — caps a four-week period in which the speaker has shored up his standing among House Republicans. It began with tough talk to Chinese leaders during an 11-day trip to Asia and included tough talk at home on cutting taxes and shrinking the size of government.

The speaker and his advisers hope last week's events will bring to a close the ethics case that has dogged Gingrich since September 1994, when the first complaint was filed.

In December, Gingrich admitted he had brought discredit to the House and had broken its rules by failing to ensure that financing for two projects, including a college course he once taught, would not violate federal tax law and by giving the ethics committee untrue information. In what amounted to a plea bargain, Gingrich agreed to a House reprimand and the financial penalty in exchange for reduced charges.

A Tolerant Dutch Approach To Life and Painless Death

OPINION
Ellen Goodman

HALFWAY THROUGH our conversation, Gerrit van der Wal gets up to consult his dictionary. Surely, he says, there must be an English equivalent for the Dutch word *gedogen*.

The medical school professor, who conducted the most recent research on doctor-assisted death in the Netherlands, flips through the pages until he comes to the right place. "*Gedogen*," he reads slowly, "tolerance." Then he shakes his head and says, "No, that isn't quite right."

If the word is not easily translated, perhaps it is because the concept is so Dutch, so not-American. *Gedogen* describes a condition somewhere between forbidden and permitted. It is part of the Dutch dance of principle and pragmatism. In Holland, drugs are *gedogen*. They remain illegal, but soft drugs like marijuana and hash are available in duly licensed coffee shops that dot this city.

And too, euthanasia is *gedogen*. The ending of a life by a doctor remains illegal, but doctors who follow careful guidelines may grant their patients' death wishes.

I am in Holland because our own Supreme Court has been asked to decide the question of doctor-assisted suicide. Holland has grappled longer and more publicly with the end-of-life issues that we are only now beginning to confront seriously.

People bristled at the notion that Americans think the Dutch are ridding themselves of the old and handicapped. In fact "euthanasia" is defined here as the termination of life by a doctor at the express wish of a patient. Under the guidelines, the patient's suffering must be unbearable and without the possibility of improvement. The requests must be persistent and confirmed by a second physician.

Dr. van der Wal points out that only 2.4 percent of deaths in Holland happen with a physician's assistance. Nine out of 10 requests are turned away. Most of those who had assisted suicide were not nursing home patients but cancer patients in their 60s or 70s. They died in the last days or weeks of their illness, at home, treated by a family doctor they knew for an average of seven years.

The Dutch system is not fail-safe or without its own ethical dilemmas. Most euthanasia deaths are still (and illegally) not reported to the government. The most troubling discovery is that between 900 and 1,000 patients a year die from what they call "nonvoluntary euthanasia."

As doctors here note, a bit defensively, this is not the result of Holland's euthanasia policies. It exists unseen and unreported in countries, even the U.S., where doctors deliver lethal painkilling doses of medicine without consent.

In practice, half of those who were no longer physically able to give consent had expressed the wish for euthanasia earlier. Most were in the last stages of disease. But Dr. van der Wal agrees. "It's a weak point in your system if you don't know what the patient really wants. There is always the danger that you are ending life against the will of the patient."

It's a weak point as well that the Dutch laws don't make a distinction between mental and physical suffering. Not long ago, a psychiatrist performed euthanasia on a physically healthy woman who had lost her children and was in deep despair. He was acquitted in a case that left public confidence rattled.

More than 70 percent of the Dutch remain firm in their support of euthanasia policies. Yet time and again, even the strongest supporters of euthanasia told me, as did a retired family doctor, Herbert Cohen: "Euthanasia is not for export." The difference between Holland and America, they say, is universal health care. No one here chooses to die to protect their family finances.

Perhaps what is exportable, though, is the Dutch tolerance for ambiguity. For living in the ethical gray zone, grappling with complexity instead of denying it, keeping open to change.

The truth is that we too want to find a way of dying that is both merciful and careful. Yet today, in the countryside of canals and *gedogen*, it's not always easy to find the right words in an American dictionary.

African Girls Learn To Beat Poverty

Stephen Buckley in Nairobi

DOREEN OCHIENG, 16, has no parents. She lives in one of Nairobi's poorer neighborhoods. Most men she meets tell her the same thing: Quit school. Forget a professional career. Get married and stay at home.

But the high-school junior stays in school because she has made a simple equation: No education means consigning herself to the bruising poverty that has scarred her childhood.

"You have to go to school to get somewhere in life," said Doreen, a worn white collar poking over the navy blue sweater of the uniform she and her classmates wear at Parklands Arya Secondary School.

That is especially true for girls in Africa, where governments traditionally have left them out of the education loop. But today students such as Doreen can remain in school, because Kenya and other countries are expending more energy and shoveling more resources into efforts aimed at closing the enormous education gap between boys and girls.

In Uganda, a law prohibits families from sending only male children to school. Malawi funds scholarship programs to boost female enrollment in schools. In Guinea, girls' enrollment in primary schools has leaped from 25 percent to 45 percent since 1990. Five years ago in Ethiopia 9 percent of girls were in school; today, the figure is 22 percent.

In Kenya there are as many girls in primary schools as there are boys, a rare feat in Africa. The emphasis on girls' education has paid off: In national standardized tests this year, five of the schools ranked in the top 10 were girls' schools. The efforts are spurred by an increasingly active women's movement, and the realization among African governments that it is economically and politically untenable to deprive half their population of an education.

Governments "have come to see female education as crucial to the development of their countries," said Eddah Gachukia, executive director of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), which funds projects that promote girls' schooling. "If Africa is going to survive, there's a need to pay more attention to putting more girls in schools."

Decades ago, the countries that colonized Africa educated only males, a tradition that post-independence governments embraced, with disastrous results. Of the more than 50 million eligible Africans who are not in school, 35 million are girls. Fifty percent of girls who enroll drop out by the fourth grade. Only 10 percent of girls in Africa make it to the secondary level.

Because free public education is rare in Africa, the poverty that pervades the continent, along with a high fertility rate, has made it nearly impossible for families to send all their children to school. For many, the choice is between paying school fees and feeding the children.

Many families sent only their boys to school, believing that girls should learn their lessons at home. When they did send their daughters to school, they often warned them away from such traditionally male professions as engineering or law.

In addition, many African countries have refused to allow girls who become pregnant to continue their schooling; teenage pregnancy is among the leading reasons for the high drop-out rate. Only in the past few years have some nations repealed those policies.

Such policies have changed, because over the past decade Africa's educated women have become alarmed at the drooping rates of girls' enrollment. That alarm spawned groups such as FAWE, which has chapters in 27 African countries. At the same time, girls' education has become a hot issue among major donor countries and organizations. It was no surprise that Hillary Rodham Clinton chose to visit Uganda on her tour of Africa last month, in part because of its progress in educating girls.

Girls' schooling also has gained ground because many families see education as the only hope for tugging their children out of poverty.

"I know families who will sell their last goat to send their children to school," said Sister Maria Pacis Vogel, principal of Precious Blood Secondary School in Nairobi, a government school loosely affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church. "That wasn't happening 10 or 15 years ago."

Precious Blood, which had the top average score on Kenya's national standardized test for the second time in five years, attracts students from all socio-economic groups in Nairobi. But most are serious, disciplined students who see education as their path to success.

They are not late to class. They bombard their teachers with questions. In one physics class recently, all 17 students remained fixed on teacher Pius Odida, even when his lesson spilled several minutes over time.

The students' enthusiasm for science is striking. At the University of Nairobi, 19 percent of the female undergraduates take science courses, and 5 percent tackle engineering.

Caroline Muriuki, 17, said that being in an all-girls school has made subjects such as physics easier. "If this were a [coed] school, and let's say I did poorly on a physics test, I might think it's because I'm a girl," said Muriuki, a senior who dreams of becoming a surgeon. "But here, you see other girls doing well in the sciences, and you say to yourself, 'Well, it's not because I'm a girl. I just have to work harder.'"

Muriuki does not worry about her future. She is a strong student — scoring an A on the national standardized test. Also, her parents are teachers.

But other female students, especially those from poor families, tread a rockier road. The United Nations and education-advocacy groups in Africa note a wrenching cycle. Girls living in poverty rarely end up with an education. And because they lack education, they rarely climb out of poverty.

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Tycoons Battle for Media's Rich Pickings

David Hoffman in Moscow reports on the increasing influence of the financial oligarchy



Paperweights . . . profits and political capital can be had from media ownership PHOTO: GRAHAM TURNER

VYACHESLAV Kuznetsov, a beefy man with large hands and a wavy pompadour, bluntly explained why Gazprom, Russia's colossal natural gas monopoly, has embarked on a drive to dominate the Russian mass media.

"Do you understand what I've got in my hands, and where I can turn?" he asked, referring to the 29 newspapers and television stations Gazprom has subsidized or invested in. The Russian mass media, he said, are caught up in an epic battle among the financial titans of Russia, a contest reminiscent of the struggle for wealth and power by such American magnates as John D. Rockefeller and J. P. Morgan.

In Gazprom's gleaming skyscraper, Kuznetsov sits close to the seat of power. He is counselor to the chairman, Rem Vyakhirev, one of the financial oligarchs of the new Russia. Kuznetsov's job is to make sure that Gazprom remains a formidable financial and political empire. "Gazprom must be very careful about its image," said Kuznetsov, referring to its controversial, monopoly structure. "That is why we have to work with the mass media. Not just work. We have to invest in them."

In buying up the fledgling Russian mass media, Gazprom is not alone. Russia's powerful financial and political clans have invested heavily in the country's major newspapers and television channels in search of profits and political capital. Factories may be shuttered across the bleak Russian steppe, but media tycoons are scrambling for properties from fluffy, glossy entertainment magazines to pay-satellite television.

It is a gold mine for political influence. In last year's presidential campaign, two of the most powerful media tycoons, Vladimir Gusinsky and Boris Berezovsky, played a key role in reelecting President Boris Yeltsin. Now, others are striving to follow.

In the broad diversity of media — and free speech — available today, Russia is light-years beyond Soviet totalitarian rule. Hundreds of newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations bombard Russians with uncensored views. At the same time, the idealism of the early post-Soviet years, in which the liberal press blazed new trails in challenging authority, has dimmed in the shadow of the powerful new corporate owners.

"Freedom of speech and the independent attitude of the mass media were the first gains of perestroika," recalled Ludmila Telen, deputy editor of Moscow News. "Today, disappointment and disillusionment in the mass media is becoming disappointment in democracy itself."

Last year, many Russian journalists backed Yeltsin because they feared a Communist victory would threaten their hard-won freedoms. But the dalliance with the Kremlin did not end there. Since then, Gusinsky and Berezovsky, along with a circle of wealthy financiers, have continued to support the Yeltsin government; and Berezovsky serves in it.

Despite their fraternal quarrels, these plutocrats are part of an emerging Russian establishment. The new Russian oligarchs "want to try and preserve the status quo in Russian politics and society," said media analyst Andrei Richter. "They don't mind spending millions of dollars to do that, and they think that by spending millions of dollars they will influence public opinion in favor of what they believe is a market economy, stable government, with Yeltsin as the guarantor."

Gusinsky, 44, a one-time theater director who found riches in banking and real estate, has recently taken an enormous gamble. Earlier, he built a lucrative business, Most Bank. Now, he has given up his post as bank president and devoted himself full time to a new media-holding company, Media-Most.

Gusinsky's gamble is that Russia is hungry for entertainment and news, despite its economic distress. His crown jewel is NTV television. Founded in early 1994 as Russia's first major commercial network, NTV has grown to become a Russian television powerhouse.

When Yeltsin went to war against separatists in Chechnya in late 1994, NTV's news broadcasts were hailed as brilliant and courageous, showing that the Kremlin was lying. "In the morning one day there was a statement that Russian warplanes were not bombing Grozny," recalled Igor Malashenko, president of NTV. "This very day, in the evening, we showed our piece from Grozny, with Russian warplanes dropping bombs. It had an enormous effect."

But in the last two years, NTV's leaders and broadcasts have allied closely with the Kremlin. As Yeltsin's reelection campaign loomed early last year, Gusinsky and Berezovsky, who between them controlled two of the three top television outlets — became behind-the-scenes kingmakers for Yeltsin.

"This was not an election," said Gusinsky, "but a choice between two paths for the country. It was like a civil war without the shooting."

The tycoons recruited reformer Anatoly Chubais to run the campaign. The television coverage was overwhelmingly pro-Yeltsin. The group helped recruit, promote and later dump Alexander Lebed, the popular retired general, and pushed for the ouster of Yeltsin's crony and chief bodyguard, Alexander Korzhakov.

The alliance with Yeltsin came as Gusinsky was preparing to launch a Murdoch-style pay satellite television network, NTV-Plus. Gusinsky talked to foreign investors, but said he could not give them the control they wanted.

On June 11, just days before the first round of the presidential election, Gazprom announced it would buy 30 percent of NTV. The cost of the deal has never been disclosed.

Several outsiders have speculated that Gazprom made the investment to help Gusinsky at the behest of the government. But Gusinsky said: "For me this is new information. I don't know who pressured them. I don't think that many people can push them — Gazprom is a state within a state."

Gusinsky's empire continued to expand. On September 20, Yeltsin signed a decree effectively tripling NTV's air time from six hours a day to 18-20 hours. Then in November, NTV-Plus took to the airwaves.

While NTV's day-to-day news coverage is regarded as highly professional, the company's leaders have been openly sympathetic to the Kremlin. For example, when Chubais was named first deputy prime minister recently, he was interviewed in prime time. He was not asked a single question about crushing economic problems such as wage, pension and tax arrears, even though NTV has highlighted social ills in other news broadcasts.

Gusinsky does not hide his admiration for Chubais. "Chubais is not only an idealist, he's a fierce idealist," he said. He added that the wealthy Russian bankers and magnates see themselves as engaged in a bitter fight for "a democratic, open country, in which bandits will not come to the Kremlin and be photographed with the president. "We want a normal country with a normal economy, not a fascist or nationalist country."

In the early years after the Soviet collapse, newspapers, once heavily subsidized, could barely survive on their own.

"There is simply no quality newspaper that is published on its own legs," said Vitaly Tretyakov, editor of Nezavisimaya Gazeta, or Independent Newspaper. In 1995, he recalled, his salary was $10 a month. "I didn't think of the quality of the newspaper every day," he said. "Every day I had one task: where to get the money to pay the salaries."

Finally, after a bitter staff schism, the paper closed, its doors locked. Tretyakov went to an isolated Greek island for a vacation. Then Berezovsky called from Moscow. Tretyakov said that he told Berezovsky, "I need money. People are hungry."

Berezovsky flew Tretyakov home, by helicopter and chartered jet, and paid for a security firm to break open the offices, Tretyakov recalled. Nezavisimaya Gazeta reappeared, in Berezovsky's portfolio. Tretyakov said he warned Berezovsky the newspaper would continue to reflect diverse opinions. It remains a highbrow paper for the intelligentsia, with a heavy emphasis on foreign affairs and security.

Berezovsky later became deputy secretary of Yeltsin's security council. In an interview, he said he invested in mass media for eventual profit, but in the short run "to explain to society our views, and without a doubt, influence the political process."

A sign of how intensely the Russian clans are fighting for media properties came recently when a plan to sell 20 percent of Komsomolskaya Pravda to Gazprom ran into trouble. In a surprise move, some directors decided instead to sell to Oneximbank, another powerful financial group.

The competition among the clans often reaches the front pages. Editors and journalists say it is common for clan feuds to be settled through leaked material — secret wiretaps, bank records, government documents — designed to smear someone.

"Qualified journalists understand when this kind of stuff gets into their paper, what kind of games are being played," said Telen, of the Moscow News. "But when they know it has been sanctioned by the owner, their power is limited."

"Not a single newspaper can survive on advertising," she said. "It is still very easy to turn newspapers into collective propagandists who will service the interests of opposing political forces."

Officials Begin Anti-Monopoly Drive

PRESIDENT Boris Yeltsin's new team of reformers has embarked on a full-fledged campaign to restructure Russia's powerful energy monopolies, including the natural-gas giant Gazprom, in hopes of spurring competition and lower prices, *writes David Hoffman*.

Boris Nemtsov and Anatoly Chubais, the first deputy prime ministers recently appointed by Yeltsin, are spearheading a fresh anti-monopoly drive aimed at Gazprom and Unified Energy Systems, the country's sprawling electricity behemoth.

Both are legacies of the Soviet era and, despite Russia's transformation from socialism to free-market economics, remain partially owned by the state. The reformers hope lower energy prices would boost Russia's manufacturing sector.

For several years, free-market economists and the International Monetary Fund have urged the reform and restructuring of the energy monopolies, but Gazprom in particular has resisted drastic change, relying on the formidable backing of its onetime boss, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. It remains a wealthy and extraordinarily influential company.

However, there are signs that the anti-monopoly reformers have been emboldened. The appointment of Chubais and Nemtsov, a former provincial governor, as Chernomyrdin's top deputies was a signal that Yeltsin is now more willing to back reform.

"If we want to move forward, something has to be done with these monopolies," said Irina Yasina, a journalist who writes about economics and is co-owner of Prime, an information agency. "Restructuring is like breathing. We need it like air. Monsters like that can set any price. They inflate their prices. That is why energy prices are very high, everywhere."

Unified Energy Systems is the country's dominant power company, with control over 70 percent of electricity generation and 100 percent of transmission, according to Brunswick Brokerage, a leading investment bank in Moscow. The state owns 51 percent of the firm. Nemtsov has criticized it for inefficiency, for setting rates too high and for failing to pay its tax and pension arrears.

Gazprom, which is the largest supplier of natural gas in the former Soviet Union and provides a quarter of Western Europe's supplies, is 40 percent state-owned. But the Yeltsin government has never asserted much control over Gazprom, and it allowed the company's management to hold 35 percent of the total shares in trust for the state.

This month, however, the head of the State Property Committee, Alfred Kokh, made the surprising suggestion that Russia may reclaim control over those shares. Citing Gazprom's decision to purchase 30 percent of the NTV television channel and invest in other media and banking properties last year while it still owes millions of dollars in taxes, Kokh said: "The interest of the state in Gazprom . . . is to see it pay all the taxes." Gazprom has responded that it too has suffered from non-payments, for gas deliveries.

Several analysts predicted Nemtsov may steer clear of a collision with Gazprom. They said it is more likely that Nemtsov will first go after the electric monopoly, which lacks Gazprom's political muscle.

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The Strongman's Own Story

Eugene Robinson

AMERICA'S PRISONER:
The Memoirs of Manuel Noriega
By Manuel Noriega and Peter Eisner
Random House. 293pp. $25



ILLUSTRATION: GARY VISKUPIC

HE IS one of America's most famous prison inmates, and the only one certified as a prisoner of war. Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, the bantamweight Panamanian strongman who delighted in thumbing his nose at the United States, also has the distinction of being the only convicted felon in the U.S. prison system whose capture required the invasion of a sovereign country, an action that cost hundreds of lives.

The December 20, 1989, invasion of Panama seems almost to belong to another time. The Cold War was petering out, and one of its last remaining battlegrounds was Central America. Contras, Sandinistas, Guatemalan generals, Salvadoran death squads — the characters have the musty air of history around them now. But then Central America was hot, and one of its most incendiary figures was a pockmarked little man who delighted in taunting then-president George Bush.

Panama was invaded; Noriega was captured, tried and convicted on drug trafficking charges; now he sits in a prison cell, apparently convinced that someday he will win release. His memoirs are no apologia: Noriega isn't the least bit apologetic, except perhaps about a few tactical errors that left him more vulnerable than he otherwise might have been. With journalist Peter Eisner, who covered the Panama invasion for Newsday, Noriega has written a fascinating book in which he doesn't give an inch: Throughout, he insists he was robbed, he was bullied, he was framed, he was right.

Eisner has the unenviable task of giving voice to a most unattractive man. The ugliness lies more in what Noriega fails to say. He doesn't deal substantively with allegations that he essentially rigged an election except to say that he was following the "Mexican political model," in which Mexico's ruling party has doled out patronage and stuffed ballot boxes for years — with no complaints from the Americans. He has nothing to say about human-rights abuses and the way he suppressed opposition.

He notes that, however he ran his country, those actions were not crimes under American law. His criminal offense, proven in a U.S. courtroom, was drug trafficking. Noriega denies the charge; and Eisner, in a section of the book he researched and wrote independently, finds the evidence wanting.

His conclusion is based on the conflicting evidence presented at Noriega's trial, which he covered, and the fact that the most damning testimony came from convicted traffickers who stood to win better prison conditions or lighter sentences if they implicated Noriega. And Eisner notes that U.S. drug agents in Panama gave much less credence to the charges than their superiors in Washington.

The fascinating passages are the accounts of secret meetings, covert operations and other dealings in the U.S. crusade to fight Cuban and Soviet influence in Central America. Noriega describes meeting Bush when he was CIA director: They had a nice lunch, he writes, and exchanged cryptic comments in a kind of spymasters' code. Years later, when Bush was vice president, they met again; Noriega alleges that Bush made a "subtle" request to use the Panama Canal Zone as a base for counterinsurgency operations in El Salvador.

He charges that the Americans used a base in Panama to train Salvadoran death squads. He describes a secret U.S. installation called "the Tunnel" that he says was used for high-tech surveillance of Cuba. He describes his own frequent contacts with the CIA, including Reagan-era spy chief William Casey, and portrays them as mostly involving messages the Americans wanted him to pass on to Cuban leader Fidel Castro, whom Noriega knew well: "As a result of these dealings, it is always inferred that I was some sort of U.S. agent, which was never the case."

Bush is Noriega's obsession, and he blames Bush for all that has befallen him. But he also lashes out at former Costa Rican president and Nobel Peace Prize winner Oscar Arias, accusing him of hypocrisy and double-dealing.

This story is Noriega's own, and while not always believable, it is compelling.

Time on Our Side

Selwa Roosevelt

THE LAST GIFT OF TIME:
Life Beyond Sixty
By Carolyn G. Heilbrun
Dial. 225pp. $19.95

SOME time ago, Carolyn Heilbrun decided that when she reached the age of 70 she would commit suicide, thus avoiding the inevitable descent into the abyss of frailty, illness and senility.

A shocking thought that probably occurs to many people, though few would admit it. But Heilbrun is made of sterner stuff. A former professor of the humanities at Columbia University, and an articulate feminist, she is the author of eight books of scholarship, including the classic Writing A Woman's Life. She also has written detective novels under the pseudonym of Amanda Cross.

Now in her seventies, Heilbrun in The Last Gift Of Time reflects on the many joys and surprisingly few limitations of life beyond 60. Indeed, she considers her sixties the happiest decade of her life.

"I find it powerfully reassuring now to think of life as 'borrowed time.' Each day one can say to oneself: I can always die; do I choose death or life? I daily choose life the more earnestly because it is a choice." She thinks the major danger in one's sixties is to be "trapped in one's body and one's habits, not to recognize those supposedly sedate years as the time to discover new choices and to act upon them."

So far so good. But her choices do not seem particularly imaginative or bold. She hates to travel and, seeking solitude, she buys a second house in the country, leaving the first one for the use of her husband, her children and grandchildren.

The first night alone in the new house, the doorbell rings; to her relief and delight, it is her husband, "I thought I should keep you company, just for the first night." He remained ever after, to share and respect her occasional need for solitude.

Would she have made such a choice as a widow? No. As she notes, "Solitude, late in life, is the temptation of the happily paired; to be alone if one has not been doomed to aloneness is a temptation so beguiling that it carries with it the guilt of adultery, and the promise of consummation."

Heilbrun, fleeing the arcane world of academia, made big waves when she abruptly resigned after 30 years at Columbia, but she alludes only indirectly to her reasons. (One fault with the book is the lack of an introduction or epilogue with the salient details of her life. It is a bit annoying to assume that we know them.)

She refers to the "poisonous atmosphere" at Columbia, which she determinedly left behind. "I entered a period of freedom and only past sixty learned in what freedom consists: to live without a constant, unnoticed stream of anger and resentment, without the daily contemplation of power always in the hands of the least worthy, the least imaginative, the least generous."

With the freedom to choose what to do next, she warns those with too much time and "no world" to find a world. The work involved should be concentrated, even difficult, but with measurable progress. She eschews dilettantism — "dabbling" defeats the purpose, i.e. to maintain a carefully directed intensity.

Nonetheless, she regrets spending the first five years of her sixties writing a biography of Gloria Steinem, a woman she still admires. So why the regret? "In all the other undertakings of my sixties, whether a house, a dog or the contemplation of death, I emerged changed, refigured with my life altered to extend the range of possible reactions and experiences, however subtle or internal . . . after the book's completion, it was as though the whole experience had disappeared forever."

Her views on sex and romance might resonate with women like herself who enjoy long, happy marriages, but she offers little comfort to widows and divorcees who might yearn for new romantic and sexual adventures. "As we women reach our later years, sex, if it is part of our lives, is a by-product, not the dominant element . . . sex after 60 cannot be the object of any undertaking, though it may sometimes be a wonderful and unsought-for result."

Particularly insightful are chapters on "Living with Men," "Sadness" (not to be confused with nostalgia) and "Mortality." But provocative and wise though she is, her writing is sometimes convoluted and I would have enjoyed more of her wry humor. Growing old could be heavy going without a sense of humor and an eye for the ridiculous.

Yolanda Loses the Plot and Finds Herself

Claire Messud

¡YO!
By Julia Alvarez
Algonquin. 309pp. $18.95

JULIA Alvarez's new novel virtually calls to her readers from the shelf. Yo, in English, is an informal greeting; in Spanish, it is the subject, "I." In this case, it is also the nickname of Alvarez's protagonist, Yolanda, the eccentric third sister of the ebullient Garcia family. As readers of Alvarez's delightful first novel, How The Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, will recall, Yolanda is "nicknamed Yo in Spanish, misunderstood Joe in English, doubled and pronounced like the toy, Yoyo." Torn between two cultures — that of her native Dominican Republic and that of the United States, where she has lived since childhood — Yolanda finds that her name, like her identity, is constantly slipping. A writer, she lives in language, and yet language cannot hold her still.

By the same token, in ¡Yo!, Yolanda is a protagonist without a voice. The novel is unmistakably hers: a portrait of Yolanda as artist, woman, lover, stepmother, daughter, it swirls around its subject, in praise and condemnation. But Yolanda herself does not bring pen to paper. Summoned, conjured, but not present, Yolanda the creator of characters is, here, the created character of those around her.

It is, we are informed at the outset, a just revenge. The novel is divided into 16 sections, each spoken from a different point of view. The first, attributed to Yolanda's sisters, expresses the frustration of those who have been used by Yo as fodder for fiction. The chapters that follow, whether spoken by Yolanda's cousin or best friend or lover, depict a woman alternately selfish and selfless, controlled and confused, adorable and tiresome. These voices enable Alvarez to bring us Yolanda in her full human complexity, and she remains the novel's great pleasure.

¡Yo! does not depend, in any traditional sense, upon plot, although Yolanda does, in its progress, recover from her second marriage and embark upon a third. Rather, the book is a formally contrived exploration of character, a literary response to Yolanda's claim, about human interaction, that "The old connections don't work. . . . We all have to figure out new ways of relating." Each speaker stands at a particular distance from Yolanda, and in a particular relation to her, distinct from the others. Each chapter is subtitled with an element of fiction: a genre ("poetry," "romance"); or a moment of narrative development ("motivation," "resolution"); or a larger concept ("point of view," "tone"). ¡Yo! presents itself as an experimental novel, in which gestures toward profundity lie not in the story, but in its telling.

Such innovation is typical of Alvarez, whose earlier novel about the Garcia family was presented in reverse chronological order. How The Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents haunts the reader in its reach towards an irretrievable past. Its structure is crucial to its power.

In ¡Yo!, Alvarez's structure encounters a difficulty, one the more apparent the further her speakers stand from their subject. The novel is (successfully) devoted to the fully shaded, three-dimensional portrait of Yolanda Garcia. But it achieves this portrait through the voices of men and women who appear only briefly and who, in some instances, have but a tenuous connection to their focus. Too often, these speakers themselves remain stereotypes — the very pitfall which Alvarez, in creating Yolanda, has gone to such measures to avoid. Yo's student is a blunted jock who discovers writing ("When that guy Updike or that Mailer guy wrote a book, it was a touchdown at the end of each chapter"); her landlady is an obese, inarticulate battered wife who has never wittingly met a foreigner; the suitor Yo abandons is a dope-smoking, Hawaiian-shirted hippie hangover (who wonders, "Man, what's he doing falling in love with this complicated epic chick in the middle of his life?").

Most risky, and least successful, is the monologue of the stalker who has pursued Yolanda for 15 years. Alvarez provides a flimsy sketch of his miserable childhood to justify this crazed pursuit; he is, predictably, absolutely, knife-wieldingly insane.

¡Yo! is subtle, engaging and charming; but it triumphs in spite of, rather than because of, its formal daring. Alvarez's strengths lie in the vital resonance of her supreme creation: the extended Garcia family and its retinue, sprawling across cultures, classes and generations. In this novel, Yolanda stands at center stage, but all the Garcias attract and enchant us, and in their stories lies the book's enduring appeal.

It looks like a recliner, but it's the latest in exotic health aids. It's a Physioacoustic chair, and it could help vibrate your troubles away, writes **Jerome Burne**

Sit down, get well

CERTAIN chairs are definitely nurturing. You sink into them and they embrace you with big arms, they may even adjust themselves to accommodate you. But few can be quite so nurturing as the latest in exotic health aids — the Physioacoustic chair. According to its promoters, it not only soothes and relaxes the over-stressed worker, it can also help with a host of serious and chronic conditions such as back pain, arthritis, multiple sclerosis, migraine and depression.

At first sight, with its tapered ends, leather covering and wide range of adjustments, it might be a refugee from a dentist's surgery.

But once you start settling in — choose your own position, from upright to flat — it begins to play you music. Then you become aware of a deep humming noise, and vibrations begin thrumming through your legs and back. You might be pressed up against the washing machine on spin — but it's not mechanical; or you might be beside a speaker at a rock concert — but you're not being deafened.

So what is going on? According to Michael Fielder, director of the manufacturers, Next Wave, you are being exposed to pure, low-frequency sound. This passes easily through your body — it's always the bass you can hear most clearly when the neighbours are playing INXS at four in the morning — and sets your muscles vibrating in response. This relaxes them, which expands the blood vessels and so improves the circulation. Hence the health benefits.

Actually, they claim it is more precise than that. Some of the music that throbs in your guts at an Oasis concert is low frequency, but it is also very intense and there are thousands of other frequencies jumbled up with it. The computer-controlled sound from the chair, however, is far quieter and played at pure frequencies between about 27 and 120 Hertz, or cycles per second. For comparison, the human voice can go down to about 16Hz and up to a squeak of 16,000Hz. Middle C on the piano is 256Hz. Different muscle groups respond to different frequencies, so as the frequency changes, each part of the body gets stimulated in turn.

Versions of the chair, supplied by Kirton Healthcare, have been used in physiotherapy departments of British hospitals for nearly 10 years.

The "father" of the chair is Finnish psychologist and music therapist Petri Lehikoinen, who in the early 1980s began using low-frequency sound with seriously disturbed patients — some psychiatric and some with terminal illnesses — and found it brought considerable relief. Lehikoinen believes that the sound is not only resonating with muscle groups, but it is also affecting what goes on at the cellular level. "The sound resonates with the mitochondria in the cell, where energy is produced, and also with the calcium channels," he says. "This makes the function much more efficient."



Rick Smith on his Physioacoustic chair: 'I get on it when I feel pain coming' PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS

However, it does exert its effects. The chair seems to boost the work-rates of Rover car workers. The company's chief medical officer describes the chair as "a valuable tool for promoting relaxation", giving workers a chance to "recharge and refocus". According to Michael Fielder, "It could save business a fortune. If you have these chairs on the factory floor, workers could have 20 minutes on it instead of having to take half a day off to see the doctor."

But what evidence is there that it really does work? The only person in Britain to have tested the effectiveness of low-frequency sound is Dr Tony Wigram, at Horizon NHS Trust, near St Albans, Hertfordshire. He has carried out trials on patients with severe spasticity and on normal subjects. "We found that it significantly reduced the tension in muscles and that it also reduced heart rate," he says. "Vibration is a physical force. There's no reason why it shouldn't have an effect, but there has been a lack of controlled trials. As to what it does at a cellular level, we just don't know."

Proper trials or not, Rick Smith, of St Albans, thinks it works wonders. An accident left him with both legs and his back broken and a smashed pelvis. "I was in constant pain for three years," he says. "Then I discovered the chair. Now I have one at home and I get on it the moment I feel the pain coming and it stops it. It's brilliant. It keeps my drug use right down."

Treatment on Physioacoustic chair is available at the Hale Clinic, 7 Park Crescent, London W1N 3HE (tel: 0171-631 0156 or 0171-637 3377)

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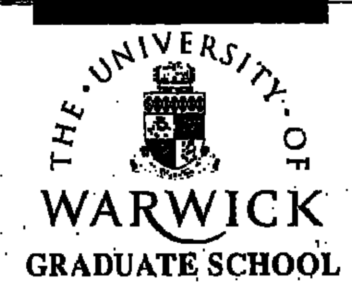
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Gentleman with a sense of justice

Chaim Herzog

CHAIM HERZOG, who has died aged 77, crowned a successful career in the Israeli military and secret services, business, law and broadcasting to become president of Israel from 1983 to 1993. He used that office to soothe emotions during a difficult decade in Israeli history. Herzog brought to Israel a touch of Anglo-Saxon coolness and constitutionality. In 1993 he became its first president to pay a state visit to London.

Born in Belfast, Herzog was nine months old when his father, Isaac Halevy Herzog, became Chief Rabbi of Ireland and the family moved to Dublin. He once noted that seeing Ireland's independence struggle had prepared him for his later life.

In 1935 Herzog left for Palestine, where he studied at a *yeshivah* — a talmudic academy — and fought with the Haganah, the Jewish militia in Jerusalem during the Arab Revolt. After his father became Chief Rabbi of Palestine's Ashkenazi community in 1937, he read law in London and was called to the Bar in 1942.

During the second world war, he trained as a paratrooper at Sandhurst. He joined the first British division in Normandy, rose to the rank of major and was wounded at Bremen. Exposure to Nazi atrocities matured him quickly. He interrogated Heinrich Himmler, became a district governor in occupied Germany and represented Montgomery at the first Jewish displaced persons' conference at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

When the war ended, so did the truce between Palestinian Jewry and the British Mandate authorities. Zionists were now set on achieving statehood and Herzog was chosen to head the Haganah's intelligence unit. From his father he inherited a respect for other faiths, which showed in his lifelong admiration for Arab civilisation.

During Israel's war of independence (1947-49), Herzog masterminded the victory at Latrun and broke the Arab siege of Jerusalem.

In 1948, at the age of 30, he became head of Israeli military intelligence, a post he held until 1950 (and again later from 1959 to 1962). From 1950 to 1954 he served as defence attaché in Washington, and, after commanding the southern army on his return from the US, he retired from regular military service in 1962.

In 1967 Herzog was recalled to military service in two unusual capacities. As a broadcaster, he relayed Israel's stunning victory in the Six-Day war. Immediately after the war he was appointed military governor of the occupied West Bank, a real test of his diplomatic skills. He broadcast again during the 1973 Yom Kippur War in Hebrew, French and English, and in 1975, as Israel's ambassador to the United Nations.

Menachem Begin's Likud victory in the 1977 elections seemed like a death-knell for Herzog. None the less, he entered the Knesset in 1981 and served the Labour opposition for two years. Despite being sidelined by Labour's leaders, the Knesset chose him over Begin's nominee to become president.

Herzog inherited a country deeply split between Arabs and Jews; and within the Jewish community, between hawks and doves, religious and secular, Ashkenazis and Sephardis. Above all, it was seething over the quagmire of the Lebanon war. At his inauguration on May 5, 1983, Herzog declared that he would fight "the new enemy which threatens to divide us from within", and later condemned the "cowardice, disrespect and intolerance that has become a norm".

Ever the diplomat, he worked well with Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, and never tried to subvert policies he disagreed with — on Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, for instance. Yet equally he stuck to what he thought was just. To Herzog, Jewish settlers who took the law into their own hands and attacked Palestinians were treasonous underminers of democracy.

Herzog's presidency was renewed in 1988. During his second term he faced the twin challenge of the intifada and rising ultra-orthodox Jewish power. Coming from a religious background himself, Herzog defended secular Jews who had built and fought for Israel, and attacked the disproportionate political clout accrued by the ultra-orthodox.



Herzog . . . Palestinian and Israeli leaders turned to him for advice

Palestinian leaders and soldiers, alarmed at their duties in the territories, turned to Herzog for a listening ear. Through bargaining he reduced the use of deportation as a punishment. In May 1993, he handed over the presidency to Ezer Weizman.

Herzog also wrote prolifically. He was the author of Israel's Finest Hour (1967), Days Of Awe (1973), The War Of Atonement (1975), Who Stands Accused? (1978), The Arab-Israeli Wars (1982) and Heroes Of Israel (1989).

Herzog was blessed with a certain modicum of good luck — such as the fortuitous trip to the gents that probably saved his life during the bombing of the Jewish Agency's Jerusalem headquarters in 1948. And yet there is still a sense of an opportunity lost, for he never played the leading political role that his attributes merited.

On hearing of his death, Shimon Peres praised him as "perhaps the most statesmanlike person Israel ever knew". Was it this regality that Israelis misinterpreted as aloofness? Despite commitment and courage, perhaps Herzog was ultimately too much of a gentleman for the rough and tumble of Knesset politics.

Lawrence Joffe

Chaim Herzog, soldier and politician, born September 17, 1919; died April 17, 1997

Scientist who unlocked the secret of sight

George Wald

GEORGE WALD, who has died aged 90, was the brilliant US biologist and biochemist who shared a 1967 Nobel Prize for unmasking the biochemical mysteries of sight. Outside the laboratory, he gained initial notoriety and then world respect by opposing the Vietnam war in a 1969 speech at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Wald said that good experimental science is like having a quiet conversation with nature. Each step in a series of experiments is devised to allow nature to speak intelligibly so the scientist has only to listen.

He resolved what had for decades been the central conceptual mystery of the visual process. Hereditary night blindness was known to the ancient Egyptians and, during the first world war night blindness was shown to occur as a consequence of vitamin A deficiency. In Britain, in the 1920s, Tansley had shown that vitamin A-deficient rats produce much less rhodopsin than normal animals, but the biochemical role of vitamin A remained unknown.

This mystery prompted Wald — who gained an American National Research Council fellowship after receiving his Columbia University doctorate in 1932 — to examine the structure and biochemistry of the retina. In 1933, working at Otto Warburg's Berlin laboratory he made the first identification of vitamin A in cells in the retina. He confirmed his discovery with Paul Karrer in Zurich and sought to follow this up in Berlin during a year under Otto Meyerhof at the then world famous Kaiser Wilhelm Institute.

However, under Hitler, anti-Jewish pressure drove Wald back to America. In 1934, he was invited to Harvard, where he remained as a research scientist, biology teacher and eventually professor until his retirement in 1977. He carried forward the difficult, subtle investigation which eventually revealed the role of vitamin A in the creation and cycling of visual purple — rhodopsin.

Wald received the Lasker Award in 1953, the Rumford Medal of the American Academy in 1959 and, in 1967, a share of the Nobel Prize. He continued working at Harvard as professor emeritus until a few years ago.

For the last 25 years of his life, apart from his articulate opposition to war, Wald became outspoken about the problems of developing countries, was profoundly concerned about the dangers of nuclear power and the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and involved himself in the investigation of abuses of human rights. He served as president of tribunals investigating abuses in El Salvador, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Guatemala and Zaire.

When, at the time of Vietnam, Wald declared himself proud to be on President Nixon's enemies list, he declared a toughness — he grew up in an immigrant quarter of Brookyln — integrity, vision and professional courage which served as a model for generations.

Anthony Tucker

George Wald, scientist, born November 18, 1906; died April 12, 1997

Media soldier for the Mexican system

Emilio Azcarraga

THE Mexican media tycoon Emilio Azcarraga, "el Tigre" (the tiger), who has died of cancer aged 66, did more than any other individual to prop up what novelist Mario Vargas Llosa famously described as the "perfect dictatorship" of his country's Institutional Revolutionary Party, the PRI.

Creator of the Televisa network, the world's most prolific producer and broadcaster of television programmes, he used what was until recently an effective monopoly in unashamed support of the government. "The company is on the side of Mexico, of the president of the republic and of the PRI," he said in 1990. "We are of the system."

Azcarraga's father, also called Emilio, was the creator of mass entertainment in Mexico, setting up a nationwide radio network and building the Churrubusco studios, the cradle of Mexican cinema. The son found his father hard to work with. As a 17-year-old he preferred to earn his living selling the Encyclopedia Britannica, but was persuaded to join the sales department of the fledgling Telesistema Mexicano. When he finally handed the reins of Televisa to his own 29-year-old son, Emilio Azcarraga Jean, last month, the empire was worth almost $4 billion and "el Tigre" was the second richest Latin American on the Forbes magazine list.

The Televisa group owns four national television networks, the biggest Mexican cable television system, three record companies, 16 radio stations, a film company and a publishing house that sells 120 million books a year in 23 countries. There are also massive foreign holdings, and one of Azcarraga's most recent ventures was an alliance with Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation and Brazil's TV Globo to bring direct-to-home (DTH) television to Latin America. A keen football supporter, Azcarraga also owned two of the country's best soccer teams, America and Necaxa.

But it is above all as a "soldier of the president" — his own phrase — that Azcarraga will be remembered. Under the 1988-94 presidency of Carlos Salinas, television was opened up to competition, but the influence of Televisa remains enormous — as much through its hugely successful *telenovelas*, the soap operas it sells in at least 40 countries, as through its much-criticised news output.

In 1993, in a rare public pronouncement, Azcarraga told reporters that a television company's responsibility was "to entertain the poor and distract them from their sad reality and their difficult future". Education and culture, he believed, was the role of government, not of the mass media.

Ruling party politicians were grateful for the consistent refusal of Televisa to give air-time to the opposition and for the tranquillising effect of the *telenovelas*. "It's better to use tearjerkers than teargas," one of them once said.

A regular visitor to the presidential residence of Los Pinos, and informal adviser to at least six successive heads of state, Azcarraga was also a generous contributor to PRI coffers. In 1993, when Carlos Salinas hosted a campaign-funding dinner for the country's richest men, the suggested donation to the party was reportedly $25 million.

The times, however, were a-changing, and even Azcarraga realised that Televisa must move with them. When Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador took over last year as president of the Party of the Democratic Revolution — *bête noire* of the PRI — Televisa's veteran news anchor, Jacobo Zabludovsky, interviewed him live on the notoriously slanted 24 Hours programme. Lopez seemed almost as surprised as the viewers.

Phil Gunson

Emilio Azcarraga Milmo, media tycoon, born September 8, 1930; died April 16, 1997

In search of Hitler's hidden women

Louise Danz is an elderly widow set to make history as Germany's last indicted female war criminal. **Ian Traynor** reports from Bonn

FOR decades, Louise Danz has lived unobtrusively in the small village of Walldorf, her past seemingly buried in the rolling hills of Thuringia in southeastern Germany. In her twilight years, however, what must seem like another life, a previous incarnation, is suddenly coming back to haunt the 79-year-old widow.

After an on-off, seven-year investigation, the state prosecutor's office in the nearby town of Meiningen this month issued murder charges against Danz, for alleged crimes against humanity in a Nazi concentration camp in the last weeks of the second world war. If the case goes to court next month, as insiders predict but court officials refuse to confirm, she will almost certainly be Germany's last indicted female war criminal.

"The legal situation and the age of those involved mean there will probably never be another case like this," says Ilsa Eschebach, a researcher at Berlin's Free University into female criminality and cruelty under Hitler.

According to the charge sheet prepared by local prosecutors, with the help of Germany's main Nazi-hunting unit at Ludwigsburg, Danz was an SS guard at the Malchow camp, north of Berlin, when she was in charge of "evacuating" the inmates in the final weeks of the war.

Evacuation meant "death marches" as the concentration camps were emptied and their inmates forced to stumble, starved, for hundreds of miles. Thousands died. In April 1945, 17,000 women were sent on a westward march from the Ravensbrück camp, of which Malchow was a satellite. "A young SS woman supervisor with a police dog on a leash led the column, followed by two girls who incessantly hurled abuse at the poor women," wrote a witnessing Red Cross official, cited in Martin Gilbert's Atlas Of The Holocaust. "All of a sudden, a whole column of those starving wretches appeared. In each row, a sick woman was supported or dragged along by fellow-detainees."



Louise Danz is believed to have served as an SS guard at Malchow concentration camp, a satellite of Ravensbrück (above), which was reserved for women and children PHOTOGRAPH: WIENER LIBRARY

While allegedly organising one such march, Danz is said by witnesses to have been disturbed by a young girl who pleaded not to be separated from her mother. Danz beat the girl senseless with a rubber truncheon and kicked and trampled her to death "till her entrails spilled from her stomach", according to the indictment.

"I didn't do it," Danz insists. "I didn't do the things the prosecution is accusing me of doing." Speaking by phone from Walldorf, she sounds initially robust. "Yes, I was at the camp in Malchow. I was a camp guard," she confirms. "I was there for a month. Before that, I was in Poland." She is believed to have served as an SS guard at Auschwitz and Majdanek, both in Poland. She confirms she was at Majdanek, then her firmness dissolves and she breaks down before hanging up. "No, I don't have a lawyer. I can't afford one." Danz was sentenced to life by a tribunal in Cracow in Poland in 1947 for beating and abusing prisoners at Auschwitz and Majdanek. She was released 10 years later and settled in Walldorf. She has no children.

According to Holocaust researchers, there are dozens of women like Danz, quietly living out their years in Germany, their roles as SS camp guards more than half a century ago almost forgotten. "She lived a normal life for decades," Eschebach says. "And there are many like her." From 1938 to 1945, Ravensbrück was reserved for women and children. It was also the training centre for female SS staff.

Of the 132,000 women and children interned at Ravensbrück, three out of four women did not survive — around 5,000 women and children were gassed to death after a gas chamber was set up at the camp in February 1945. There was forced prostitution, slave labour and, from the summer of 1942, forced sterilisation and gruesome medical experiments. In order to simulate battle wounds and test for their treatment, female inmates had their legs cut open. Sawdust and powdered glass were rubbed into the wounds.

A key administrator of the abominations was Dr Hertha Oberheuser: at the Nazi doctors' war crimes trial in Nuremburg in 1946, she was the sole woman among the 23 accused. She got 20 years.

Around the same time, Allied tribunals put women on trial. Between 1946 and 1948, the British in Hamburg put on trial several SS women from Ravensbrück. Dorothea Binz, a notoriously cruel guard, was executed after a British tribunal verdict.

When Allied tribunals gave way to the authorities of the two German states after 1949, the prosecution of women for Nazi crimes fell dramatically. The last trial in East Germany was of three women sentenced to life in Rostock in 1966. Two of the three are dead; the sole survivor was pardoned in reunified Germany in 1991.

Attempting to estimate the numbers of women tried and sentenced, and what happened to them, is proving almost impossible. "There is no central information on the number of women suspected of crimes against humanity," Eschebach says, "and no definitive figure." Researchers are raking through newly opened East German, east European and Russian archives for a fuller picture.

It was the opening of the East German archives that drew Danz to the attention of the Nazi-hunters. New evidence was uncovered and a new witness to the alleged murder discovered in 1995.

In Walldorf, meanwhile, a village official says Danz keeps a low profile. "I haven't seen her in the village for ages. She's always lived here, but she keeps herself to herself, lives alone. A few people have got aggressive since they saw these things in the paper, but generally it's quiet here."

A Meiningen court official says Danz has not been taken into custody because there is no chance of her trying to abscond. She adds that since Danz is 79, there has to be concern for her health, raising the possibility that the case may not come to court.

Before hanging up the phone, Danz shifts from robust rebuttal of the charges against her to frail pleading. "Look, you know I had a stroke recently," she says. "Please just leave me in peace. I can't take any more."

Immigrant flood borders on crisis

Ignoring numerous perils, millions of immigrants are entering South Africa illegally, putting its economic future at risk, writes **Ruaridh Nicoll** in Komatipoort

PEDRO FRANCOS staggers barefoot and bleeding across a bridge that leads towards the heart of South Africa. Behind him lies the unleavened poverty of his native Mozambique and the border crossing of rolled wire, soldiers and massive electric fence. Nursing his blood-soaked wrist, the 22-year-old struggles away from his past but without destination or hope. The past catches up, in the form of a police pick-up truck, and he does not even wince. He is called over.

The cop grabs Francos's uninjured wrist and looks for the mark of a childhood inoculation on the skin of his forearm — the sign of a Mozambican. "Passport?" the officer asks and Francos shakes his head. He is motioned into the back with the rough familiarity of contempt — the police see Francos's kind all the time.

Daily they arrive, crossing the fence in their hundreds, sneaking through the border post or fording the river and entering the Kruger Park with its crocodiles and lions. More than 150,000 a year are caught and sent back, but the weight of immigration is so heavy it threatens South Africa's future by unbalancing its economy.

The three-line fence, the so-called "snake of fire", is South Africa's first line of defence. During the late 1980s its 60km stretch carried a lethal current which killed 64 people, more than all those who died trying to cross the Berlin Wall. Now it sends a jolt similar to that of a car battery, triggering alarms in the army outposts that dot the line.

The policeman stood looking at the fence while a soldier telephoned and the rapid-response team headed towards the spot. "We'll never stop them," he said. "Not until Mozambique's economy recovers and the incentive disappears."

The starving masses that crowd the nation's 7,000km border see South Africa as a land of milk and honey. "It's not a question of getting rich, it's a matter of survival," said Lieut-Col Gerhard Botha of the South African army's Eastern Transvaal command. On the Mozambican side of the border there are land mines and old AK-47s, the remnants of civil war, while on South Africa's side there are banana plantations and sugar cane fields.

But it is a mirage. South Africa has between 30 and 40 per cent unemployment. The estimated 2-4 million illegal immigrants, who work for a pittance, threaten the fabric of society. The police blame them for spiralling crime, the government complains of lost resources for housing and health care, and the people resent the jobs they lose. "We don't have the ability to look after our own," said a government official. But there is little will to flick the switch that would set the barrier from "non-lethal" to "lethal" again. "You can't kill people because they are starving," said the policeman.

To cross, the Mozambicans hire guides to take them through the minefields that still blight the former Portuguese colony, help them under the fence and then arrange for a minibus to pick them up on the South African side. For $130 they get the ultimate deal with a job arranged at the other end. "Once in a while we see white guys with cellphones organising it," said the policeman. "It's big business."

Francos could not afford that sort of package. Instead he paid $6 to be smuggled through the border post with 10 others in the back of a pick-up. "I was looking for a job on a farm," he said. Instead he slept in bushes at risk from black mambas and cobras. "Three South Africans wanted my money. They broke a bottle and stabbed me," he went on. "They held me on the ground and took my jacket and my shoes." Badly cut, he wandered roads where everybody was his enemy.

Once through the fence, the illegal immigrants face a 13km trek through thick bush patrolled by soldiers and the voluntary Kommandos, a throwback to the days when the Boers fought the Zulus, the Xhosa and the British. The first black Kommando was set up on this border in 1994, where it fought and beat cross-border cattle rustlers.

For the fugitives who get as far as the game parks, the end can be terrible. Last year a woman member of a group that had split up in the Kruger was heard screaming as she was torn apart by lions. Early this year a man was taken by a crocodile. "The crocodiles are fearless. When one took a soldier we dredged the river and pulled up a body that wasn't our man," said Botha.

The South African government is caught between conscience and reality. The incomers are the same people who supported the African National Congress during the long apartheid era. "These countries gave us a base and asylum, food and resources during our struggle," President Nelson Mandela said recently. "Now we are free we cannot threat them as hostile people. But welcoming illegal immigrants will aggravate our unemployment. We have to find a balance."

Resentful South Africans have attacked the foreigners' shanty towns, burning them out because they believe they bring disease. It is not just Mozambicans who come over the wire, but natives of Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire, Mali, Kenya, Morocco and even India. They have turned Johannesburg into a bubbling, vibrant, multicultural city.

Unwilling to get tough, the South Africans round up as many immigrants as they can and ship them back across the border. Those picked up by the army at the fence are returned the same day; one man was picked up three times in 24 hours. A weekly train from Johannesburg returns hundreds of Mozambicans to a siding just beyond the border.

"Most are back in Jo'burg before the train," says the cop before turning to an aide and nodding at Francos. "You can take him to Mozambique," he says. "He'll be back tomorrow." — *The Observer*

The Exodus collective is more than just a bunch of rave partygoers, writes **Alex Bellos**

Please let our people go-go

RUSH HOUR started just after midnight. Soon Dunstable's Woodside industrial estate was crammed with cars. Young people — some having driven from East Anglia, the Midlands and the Home Counties — were milling around, their stereos beating out jungle and techno. Everyone was waiting to be taken to the rave.

Exodus arrived at 1am. The routine was planned with military precision: as if to emphasise the point, the jeeps and truck carrying the sound equipment were painted army green. Organisers, many with their faces covered in hoods, waited until they were assured that the prospective venue was secure.

Once they had the all-clear, the convoy set off. Up to 200 cars snaked out of the estate and then doubled back to a vacant warehouse. Some Exodus members broke in and pushed open the main entrance. A sound system and bar were quickly set up. By 3am, 1,000 people were dancing. The last didn't leave until late the next morning.

If this was happening in 1990 then it would be unspecial — just another rave in another town. But this is 1997. Free parties like this aren't supposed to go on any more. The Government criminalised them twice over, first with the Pay Parties Bill and then with 1994's Criminal Justice Bill, which gave police powers to stop people gathering and listening to "repetitive beats". So why do police turn a blind eye in Dunstable? Perhaps the local force doesn't have enough numbers or funding to control these parties. Perhaps the raves are safe and peaceful, so they don't need to. The most important reason is who they are dealing with.

The Exodus collective is one of rave culture's most formidable and intriguing communities. With their distinctive kiss-and-handshake greetings, its 70-odd members are a kind of self-contained alternative society. Not just concerned with putting on parties, they are committed to channeling profits and energy into rebuilding derelict properties for the homeless. Many of them live in their "community farm" or in their housing co-operative, Haz Manor, on the outskirts of Luton. They are techno terrorists with a political edge. "We see ourselves as freedom fighters," says Glen Jenkins, the collective's loudest and most eloquent voice.

Exodus's five-year struggle against the local establishment is one of alternative culture's longest-running and most colourful sagas. Its troubled history has involved a firebombing, a murder case, a near riot, allegations of police corruption, High Court cases, mass squatting, Freemasons and Vietnamese pot-bellied pigs.

In the early days the battle lines were clear. The collective's job was to put on raves; the job of Bedfordshire police was to stop them. But as Exodus appeared to be winning — its parties had a national profile and on one occasion attracted 10,000 people — the police clamped down hard. In early 1993 they raided Exodus's Long Meadow Farm base and arrested 36. It was an own-goal. Word spread and some 4,000 supporters converged on Luton's police station demanding their release. It set the tone for the years of animosity between the two sides.

Other police operations in the following weeks fuelled Exodus's belief that it was being victimised. This was compounded by police allegations that $3,200 worth of Ecstasy was found on the farm. Again zealousness led the police into trouble. The case against the collective collapsed, and it was alleged that an officer had planted the drugs. Bedfordshire county council took the unprecedented step of voting to hold a public inquiry into the behaviour of its police force — although it has not happened because the council says it cannot afford it.

By now Exodus's troubles were being given national attention by civil rights lawyers, worried about the police's alleged behaviour, and by other alternative communities who felt Exodus's plight symbolised their own. "There is a kind of race on for them to smash us and for us to build," says Jenkins, who in his former life was a train driver and Aslef shop steward.

The conflict reached its most bitter point in 1995 when a prominent member of the collective, Paul "Bigs" Taylor, was charged with murdering a man in a fight outside the Globe pub in Dunstable, which is run by Glen Jenkins's mother, Elizabeth. But again the prosecution case was weak. A day before the trial the charge was reduced to grevious bodily harm, and eventually Taylor was cleared of all charges.

The latest run-in with the law involves the Globe, a bustling venue that plays loud dance music and attracts some of Dunstable's more flamboyant young customers. In November, police entered it to make a routine licencing check. Something akin to a brawl ensued.

'There is a kind of race on for them to smash us and for us to build'

Two pubgoers, one Glen's brother Richard, aka Hazard, have been charged with assault. If they are convicted, police hope to have the Globe's licence revoked.

Exodus claims the police were deliberately provocative. Elizabeth Jenkins believes the police are harassing her because of their vendetta against her sons. (Ironically, her eldest son has been a policeman for 17 years.)

Long Meadow Farm is one of the most surreal places in Britain. Because it is bordered on one side by the M1 and on the other by a high-speed rail link, you need to strain your ears above the noise to hear any animals. It's not hard to understand why its neighbours might fear the collective. The military vehicles parked in its drive make it look more Mad Max than the Archers. On one side a ditch has been dug to help defend the site in case of eviction moves.

The farmhouse is being rebuilt but you can still make out the blackened wood under the roof from last year's firebombing. (Exodus says it knows who did it but the police investigation has been fruitless.) To call it a farm is perhaps exaggerating. It has goats, horses and pot-bellied pigs, but no farmer. The urban ravers who live there are essentially zookeepers who occasionally bus the animals to Luton to show schoolchildren.



Raving for freedom . . . at one of the Exodus-led 'community dances' that local councils are trying to prevent PHOTOGRAPH: NICK COBBING

The farm is on land bought up by the Department of Transport for a road scheme that was subsequently dropped. Exodus claims it has rebuilt a derelict site and reclaimed it for community use. The DoT wants to sell it on and has sent an eviction notice.

Exodus's fight to stay has won it friends in the highest places. After it failed to challenge the eviction in the local court, it realised it might have a legal right to stay under the Landlord and Tenants Act 1954. Some members trotted off to the High Court in London to seek leave to appeal. When 40 of them entered the public gallery, Lord Justice Hirst judged in their favour almost immediately. He said Exodus had done a "splendid job" of renovating the farm and stayed the eviction until the court case.

Exodus's housing project in Luton is testament to how much the group has achieved. It too was a squat, on the site of a derelict hospice, but after a year the council gave it a lease. It is now a housing co-operative, registered with friendly societies, that provides accommodation for 33 people.

Exodus says it has empowered people who otherwise would be long-term unemployed or on the fringes of crime by giving them a sense of community. Glen gets angry if you suggest his crew are simply hippies downshifting: "We're not drop-outs. We're forced-outs. Drop-outs can go back to where they came from. We can't."

Professor John Benington, director of Warwick University's Local Government Centre, has spent time with Exodus and believes it has created an "exemplary" community: "They have developed some very strong community values — accepting differences between people and trying to repair conflicts between generations. A lot of them have managed to rebuild relationships with their parents. They are a very challenging group. For people who might otherwise be unemployed or inactive, they have found a way of using time that provides a lot of support for themselves and is very productive. But they have not realised how much the choices they have made — around dancing, drugs and other issues — have opened up deep conflicts with the public authorities."

Exodus has been running raves — it prefers the term "community dances" — every few weeks during the spring and summer since 1992. It says it performs a social need for young people who cannot afford nightclubs and who want freer ways of expressing themselves, and it provides a diversion for potential delinquents.

Local councils have used an injunction to try to prevent some of the members, including Glen and Bigs, from organising the parties. But the injunction has proved useless, as it is impossible to determine who the organisers are.

Exodus's latest mission is to have its own community centre — the Ark — so it won't risk breaking the law each time it puts on a party. And being above board would be a symbol that the wider community has accepted it.

Luton and Dunstable have 5 million square feet of empty warehouse space and Exodus wants to be rented a space for a trial period. "If we get it we will never break into a warehouse," Glen says. "We want to prove that we can do it and make it run successfully." Exodus is beginning to feel there is a rapprochement with the powers-that-be. Luton council has asked for its participation in a workshop on young people and crime. And Professor Benington is offering his services as a mediator in the Ark negotiations.

Whether or not Luton council will be able to stomach giving a community centre to a radical group whose lifestyle is on the fringes of the law, the winners will always be Luton's ravers. Whatever happens, Exodus will never stop putting on its parties.

Green homes for people without cars

John Arlidge

DESIGNED by a Yorkshireman, built by Londoners, lived in by Scots — the homes of the future, where no one owns a car, trees replace Tarmac, water is recycled and heating and lighting are free, are being built in Edinburgh.

Backed by Edinburgh Council and the Scottish Office, the $13 million estate is the most radical housing initiative since the sixties. Architects and planners say the environmentally friendly development will transform urban life.

A landscaped garden will surround more than 100 homes on the site of an old railway goods yard near the city centre. There are no roads, no parking spaces and no garages. Residents will sign an agreement not to own a car but to use one from a "pool".

Heating will be free all year round. Steam from factories will be used to heat homes and water, while solar panels on the roof of each home will provide lighting. Other energy-saving measures mean household bills will be up to 25 per cent below the UK average. Water from sinks and baths will be filtered and purified in reed beds before being used for cleaning; rainwater will be collected to be used in bathrooms; and all household waste will be recycled.

The tenement-style estate, approved by councillors last week, is the "greenest" in Britain. Alan Brown, director of Canmore Housing Association, which is behind the project, said: "No one has tried the car-free design before and we are combining for the first time all the most advanced energy-saving technologies."

The most radical element of the new scheme is the car ban. Residents will pay about $320 to join a council-run car club that will maintain and insure a fleet of vehicles in an on-site garage. They will be able to reserve cars at any time of the day or night at an hour's notice and will pay mileage and rental charges for each journey.

Although Britain's biggest developers have dismissed the car-free concept as unworkable, Canmore Housing Association has already received dozens of requests to reserve homes. Barry Cross, transport planning manager at Edinburgh council, says that the response proves that the public is ready for pioneering "pay-as-you-drive" schemes.

Bryan Thomas, the architect from Yorkshire who designed the estate, agrees. "The British traditionally love their cars and view anyone who does not have one as some sort of sexual deviant. But times are moving on."

Mr Brown says the ideas behind the new scheme will transform inner-city life.

He may be right. Later this year Camden council in London will vote on whether to copy Edinburgh's example. Other local authorities are discussing projects. For many city dwellers, freedom is the end of the road.

Information overload on the box

The computer industry hopes to sell intelligent machines to couch potatoes. **Mark Tran** reports from New York

"*WHAT'S* the biggest innovation of the last 20 years in the TV industry? The remote control," says Steve Goldberg, who manages the digital television marketing programme at Compaq Computer.

The comment sums up the low opinion computer makers have of television manufacturers as the two industries gird themselves for battle in the era of the digital television, the biggest revolution since the colour TV.

This month, the Federal Communications Commission formally gave the green light for digital, high definition televisions. Ultimately, the introduction of digital television will make obsolete all 240 million television sets in the US, and the consignment of these analogue TVs to the dustbin of history could cost as much as $250 billion in the next decade.

It was no coincidence that days after the FCC sounded the death knell for analogue TV, Bill Gates' Microsoft announced the $425 million purchase of WebTV Networks, whose black boxes allow viewers to retrieve electronic mail and surf the World Wide Web on their current television sets.

WebTV, formed in 1995, has seen less than stellar sales, but Microsoft considers the company worth its biggest investment yet in an Internet company. Some analysts saw the deal as a pre-emptive move by Microsoft to prevent another company, such as Rupert Murdoch's News Corp or Sun Microsystems, from acquiring the start-up.

There has been much hype about the convergence of communications, information and entertainment. So far, only one company has managed to combine all three into a going concern, albeit with a heavy dose of problems — America Online.

Time Warner unveiled its Full Service Network, an interactive cable television service, in Orlando, Florida, several years ago, but FSN has died a quiet death, trying to do too much too soon. Digital TV is the next Holy Grail in the quest for convergence. "TV is the ultimate convergence medium," says Peter Krelsky, a media analyst with Mercer, a management consultancy in Boston.

Digital television will offer unnaturally sharp pictures on a new wide, flat screen, as well as six-channel, digital audio systems. Since the transmissions are digital, the new television sets will take on characteristics of a computer, providing interactivity with broadcasters and cable operators, as well as a range of digital services only now being devised.

Computer makers believe that this is their big chance to push acceptance of PCs to another level after reaching a plateau of penetration of American homes, about 40 per cent. By comparison, there is at least one television in almost every American home.

"We think it is much easier to have a PC do television than to add personal computing capabilities to TV," argues Rob Siegal, a programme manager at Intel, whose big-screen PC Theater is due to go on sale in the next few months, offering both traditional TV programming and computer functions in the same unit.

TV makers, of course, believe that the TV's appeal lies in its idiot-box quality, or easy interface to put it more kindly. The television industry contends that people will want to buy digital TVs simply because of the great picture quality rather than for the ability to surf on the Net or do home banking. At the moment, Matsushita Electric Corporation of America, a subsidiary of the Japanese electronics giant, plans to keep its TVs without "intelligence capabilities".

While the TV manufacturers and computer companies prepare for this huge new market, a much more mundane factor in the potential success of digital TV is whether it will offer high-speed access to the Net along fibre-optic lines — by no means universal in the US. Britain is actually better prepared for digital TV as deregulation has led to the creation of an infrastructure with ISDN lines and satellite television.

Microsoft is betting that it can increase its penetration of the American home by piggybacking on WebTV and digital television. "We find that the computer and broadcast industries are both at a crossroads," says Craig Mundle, Microsoft's senior vice president for consumer platforms. "We want to take the PC and its progeny and see those things penetrate much more deeply into homes." In buying WebTV Networks, Gates is seeking to capture customers who surf the Web either through television or the PC. The software giant already has a foot in broadcasting through its alliance with NBC in a cable venture.

Microsoft's purchase of WebTV can also be seen as a tactical strike against Oracle and Sun Microsystems, proponents of the cheap network computer approach to the Net. With WebTV as part of its empire, Microsoft now also owns an inexpensive device costing $300 that allows access to the Net via the television. As for TV manufacturers, they are banking on couch potatoes remaining content with nothing more complicated than the remote.

Love on l'Internet

Prostitutes are moving from the streets to on-line dating agencies, writes **Paul Webster** in Paris

PARIS'S passionate love affair with the prostitute with a heart of gold has cooled. The oldest profession is being chased from its traditional pavements and wrecked by a flood of *occasionelles* — highly educated student part-timers.

Council policy to evict *les putes* from the city centre has brought havoc to areas such as the Rue Saint-Denis,which has been a red-light district for centuries. But a bigger threat has come from electronic communications, which have boosted demand for student call girls working their way through college.

Recent studies by the Paris vice squad and sociologists have confirmed a trend that breaks with historical, cultural and political folklore. A literary heritage devoted to fallen women inspired generations of writers and flowed into every form of art — Manon Lescaut, La Traviata and Toulouse-Lautrec's Petites Filles de Pigalle among them.

Popular songs such as Edith Piaf's "Milord" are riddled with sympathetic "women of the shadows", while playing prostitutes has been a rite of passage for France's greatest actresses.

The supposed redemptive and joyful value of prostitution is so strong that it tempted Hollywood to make the musical Irma la Douce with Shirley MacLaine.

But just behind the big department stores on the Boulevard Haussmann, once one of the busiest areas for what is called *Le Tapin*, there are far more beggars than tarts. Mireille Vecteur, born in 1946, the year brothels were closed down, was out on a lunchtime fishnet trawl with her miniature Scotch terrier.

"Two or three years ago if you came out of the Gare Saint Lazare you'd have had a real choice," she said. "Half-a-dozen of us would stand on the corner over there, just by the Rue de Budapest. Then the police whom we'd been paying off for years were told to clear us out."

Mireille — keeping one eye out for the *flics* and the other for her "regulars" — was a mine of recent history on prostitution, gathered during long conversations with her friends on freezing pavements. The dream of every provincial girl trying to make it the easy way in the capital was to be recruited for Madame Claude's luxurious whorehouse, known as One-two-two, from where many beautiful women graduated as wives of politicians and businessmen.

"The seventies were the last tolerant age," she recalled. "Do you remember the archbishop and the bishop who died of heart attacks in the Rue Saint-Denis 'confessing' their parishioners? Do you remember all the studios around the Champs-Elysées where the girls used to work in three shifts?

The electronic CVs for call girls are as likely to stress educational qualifications as physical attractions

"There were *maisons d'abattage* — knocking shops — around the Gare du Nord where the police turned a blind eye even when there were queues of North Africans spilling way down the street. I think the official turn round came with the arrival of the Boys from Brazil — they gave prostitution a bad name."

Until recently there were at least 400 Brazilian and other Latin American transvestites working in the Bois de Boulogne in an exhibitionist display that attracted a notorious tourist trade. Three years ago police permanently cordoned off the woods at night and the Brazilians moved on to other cities.



Shadowlands . . . A transvestite plying for custom before the Bois de Boulogne became out of bounds. Today assignations are moving on to the Internet PHOTOGRAPH: FSP

But the media focus on epic territorial clashes between the powerful males and their frailer sisters in vice distracted attention from a fundamental upheaval in every other sector.

According to Jean-Baptiste Drouet, who has just written a book called Prostitution's New Faces, the Mac — the gangster-style pimp from black-and-white film days — has become as extinct as the Madame, the brothelkeeper.

"Nowadays, you only find pimps with more than one girl operating sophisticated model agencies, porno films or calling themselves agents or impresarios," he said. "As far as the girls are concerned, you have to learn a new glossary. At the bottom end we have the *maréches*, then the *amazones* and at the top, the *occasos* or *occasionelles*."

The *maréches* take their name from the depressing outer ring of boulevards named after Napoleon's *maréchaux* (marshals). Their numbers have increased dramatically since official policy has gentrified red-light districts, including parts of Pigalle.

A rise in junkies, the influx of eastern European refugees and the distress in rundown immigrant suburbs have turned the edges of the city into a vast 24-hour emporium of cheap, casual sex. "No one has any figures on the number of children involved, but scores operate openly on the ringroad to the despair of the social services," said Drouet.

Many women resisting the downward spiral become *amazones* or *autostoppeuses* (hitch-hikers) who flag down cars in the richer suburbs, but spiralling property prices in former red-light districts, the moral revolution and improvements in electronic communications have led to the explosion of *occasionelles*.

"There is a real prudery in the town hall which runs, alongside a determination to turn run-down areas into middle-class *arrondissements*," an estate agent said. "You have to be pretty well off to live in the city centre, a factor which encourages more and more students to become part-timers to pay their rent."

A casual pick-up in central Paris is usually an electronic exercise, either through the Minitel, a screen linked to the telephone, or the Internet. Except for Parisians addicted to low-level ring-road perversity, the most popular hooker is the well-educated young provincial student who believes her social status will not be affected by asking $320 for a *passe* — 10 times the rate charged by the *maréches*.

The CVs for call girls with all-purpose names such as Aurélie and Nathalie that can be found on dozens of electronic dating services are as likely to emphasise educational qualifications as physical attractions.

But not even Jean-Baptiste Drouet's research among dozens of *occasos* at the Sorbonne came up with a satisfactory response to the 21st century dilemma: Should you ask to see her PhD before paying for a night in bed?

Letter from Benin Andrew Potter

Staged miracles

THERE are posters all over town announcing the evangelistic crusade, promising that "God will perform great miracles". Every few months a similar event is held. Recently a woman from Zaire who claimed to have been raised from the dead was here to expound her gospel. But this one is different. For a start, Pastor Reinhard Bonnke is white.

A black presidential Mercedes with motorcycle outriders picked him up from the small airport and the wailing cavalcade made its way around the streets of Parakou as the evangelist waved to the crowds. Benin's newly re-elected president, Mathieu Kerekou, was converted to Christianity during his five-year absence from power and Pastor Bonnke is benefiting from the convert's ardour.

The event itself took place at dusk in the football stadium, with loud music from an African "orchestra" of trumpets, drums and guitars. The musicians wore matching waistcoats and white shirts. Being the dry season, clouds of dust rose up into the night to hang in incandescence below the powerful lighting. A jovial master of ceremonies fanned the crowd's expectations and invited applause as "the man whom God has prepared" bounded forward.

He waved. The crowd waved back. "Let's give a big hand to Jesus," he shouted. Thousands of hands clapped. He waved again. "Are you happy, happy, happy?" he boomed. It seems that we were. He spoke in English, but it was translated into French and then into the local dialect. This inevitably slowed his delivery but did not dampen his enthusiasm.

Women weaved through the throng with vast plates of bread, young girls sold sweets, chewing gum and peanuts. It was a spectacle. There was comedy, stories, passion and incessant noise. Bonnke varied between shouting and bawling. The audience loved it. Finally, he concluded and invited prayer for salvation.

"How many here tonight need healing?" he inquired of us. At least half the crowd raised an arm. "Wow, so many," he declared as if surprised by the response. I'm even more astonished, for only a moment ago everyone was happy, happy, happy. And if so, these must have been the healthiest sick people because they had just stood for two hours in the heat listening to the evangelist.

Blind eyes will see, deaf ears will hear, the paralysed will walk and much more he promised. "Place a hand on the sick part of your body, raise the other hand to heaven, as I pray for you." He launched into a prayer that resembled more the contortions of the priests of Baal than that of a confident believer. He bellowed, he boomed, he screamed, he shouted, as he ordered illness to leave us. "I command blind eyes to see in Jesus's name. I command hernias to be healed in Jesus's name." The interpreters had a hard time translating each medical term as Bonnke continued the incantation against all manner of pathology.

FINALLY it was over, and we enjoyed a moment of stillness as he took a breather. "How many of you have been healed?" he resumed, and the same sea of hands reappeared. "Wow, so many! If you have been healed and you have the evidence come up to the platform and we will give the praise to Jesus." One of his team appeared with a camera, another with a tripod and video. Miracles, it appears, must be recorded for posterity, or is it for publicity? We were shown an elderly man who claimed a return of sight to his right eye, a young lad who could hear after years of deafness. To each we applauded and shouted Hallelujah.

Not everyone was convinced as we made our way home. Does not that woman who claimed healing work every day in the market? Is there any proof that the old man did not see before?

The crusade was due to last six nights. Bonnke didn't appear again after the third evening. No explanation was offered. His son-in-law took over, but after two nights he was popping pills to cool his headaches. The last night of the crusade was cancelled.

Physicians, heal thyselves.



Tigers are being hunted down by poachers to supply the black market for animal parts PHOTO: JULIAN HERBERT

Asia threatens last of the Siberian tigers

Lucy Jones in Vladivostok

IN THE dusty town of Ussurisk on the Russian-Chinese border a poacher known as Yuri holds a tiger skin up against the wall of his poky two-room flat. "I want $8,000. The bones and meat are in the fridge at Sasha's house," he says with a toothless grin.

The endangered Siberian tiger is not all he has to offer. Yuri can also get wild ginseng, deer horns and bear gall bladders — all from protected species, but sought-after commodities in traditional Chinese medicine.

Poaching in Russia's far east to obtain rare ingredients for sale in Asia is pushing one of the world's last untouched areas to the brink of ecological disaster, environmentalists warn.

"It's not just the Siberian tiger that is threatened. Numbers of deer, bear, sea urchins, sea-cucumbers and frogs are also at critically low levels," says Sergei Shaitarov, a biologist who has completed a study for the Tiger Protection Society in Vladivostok.

"The collapse of communism has been catastrophic for the habitat of the far east of Russia, [exposing] it to the market of Asia."

Trade in animal parts usually goes through China. Once an order is received, helicopters and poachers are hired to kill and smuggle the animals across the border or through the port of Vladivostok. A recent request for 2,000 musk deer horns was fulfilled in a week.

South Korea, Taiwan and China prohibit the sale and importation of tiger products. In Japan, import is illegal but chemists can sell old stock, a loophole for traders as it is difficult to prove the age of stock. The black market in animal parts continues to thrive because of the belief that they can cure anything from impotency to hair loss.

The acute economic situation in rural parts of Russia makes many turn to poaching. A tiger can command up to $13,000 (more than an annual salary), a bear $1,200 and deer $500. "Poachers are often policemen or from the upper ranks of the local administration, so cases rarely go to court," says Alexander Laptev, director of the Lazovsky reserve in Primorsky region.

The protection society has taken matters into its own hands, operating armed patrols that rely on a network of informers to tell them when a poacher is about to strike.

Any poachers caught are handed over to the police, but prosecution is still difficult. For this reason, the tiger society is turning its attention to the buyers.

Going undercover as customers looking for tiger products, they gather information and hand it to the local authorities. Recently, this led to the arrest of a restaurant owner in Taiwan who was selling tiger soap for $600 a portion.

"The Siberian tiger is a magnificent animal. It's like a flag. When we save the tiger, it means we have saved the forest and all that is in the forest," said Mr Shaitarov.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

FRANCE gave the United States the Statue of Liberty to commemorate 100 years of independence. What, if anything, did the US give France?

EURO Disney. — *Tom Pool, Chelmsford, Essex*

VISIT the D-Day beaches of Utah and Omaha, and military cemeteries and memorials such as Pointe du Hoc. What the US (and others) gave was beyond price. — *Richard Johnston, Reading, Berkshire*

WHEN does a cult become a religion?

WHEN it progresses from killing its members to killing non-members. — *David Lewin, Oxford*

THE essential difference is openness. Religions publish their beliefs openly in the Bible, Koran, Bhagavadgita, etc, seeking to persuade the public of their truth. Cults, however, rely on secret or special knowledge, revealed only to initiates by the cult's founder or chosen representatives. Everything depends on a personal relationship between the founder and followers, who are required to separate themselves from the rest of the world. This enables the founder to dominate and exploit them.

All religions begin as cults. Christianity began as one of several competing messianic sects and became a religion when Paul and his followers began proselytising outside Judea. Cults fade away when those who knew the founder die. Who remembers the Ranters, the Sandemanians or the Muggletonians now? — *Laurie Smith, Carshalton, Surrey*

HOW thick are two short planks?

I HAVE two propping up an armchair. They are 46mm thick but in my opinion could be a bit thinner. — *A Cottell, Southampton, Hampshire*

THREE times as thick as one short plank. Er, wait a minute . . . — *William Barrett, London*

WHAT is the evidence for St Brendan the Navigator having "sailed the Atlantic and discovered the New World" in the sixth century?

BRENDAN founded the monastery at Clonfert in 559 AD and died in 583 AD. Adamnan's life of St Columba — written about 670 AD — mentions voyages to the Hebrides, Scotland and probably Brittany. The idea that he discovered the New World rests on the ninth century Voyage Of St Brendan, a book that influenced Columbus. It tells how Brendan and 33 monks sailed to the Isle of the Blessed. Mostly drawn from sailors' yarns — from ancient Irish tales to Sinbad the Sailor — it is doubtful whether any evidential value can be attached to it. — *Tom Hennell, Withington, Cheshire*

DEAF, dumb, numb, blind. What's the word for someone with no sense of smell?

LACK of the sense of smell is called anosmia (less commonly anosphresy). The adjective should be anosmic. Ageustia is the lack of taste, an affliction that seems to have struck most of the Conservative Constituency Association of Tatton. — *Michael Martin, Liverpool*

THIS condition afflicted a friend of mine. By a cruel twist of neurology he also had no sense of taste. He always enjoyed my cooking, and was very useful when the cat fouled the carpet. — *Pete Magennis, London*

BRUT. — *Barry Stierer, Brighton*

WHAT actually is the oldest trick in the book?

SEND me a stamped self-addressed envelope and a cheque for £19.99 and I will tell you. — *Lee Wright, Winchester, Hampshire*

RELIGION. — *John Wightman, Tauranga, New Zealand*

DOES the oldest trick in the book relate to the oldest profession? — *David Stewart, Hitchin, Hertfordshire*

Any answers?

WITH air pollution and deforestation, has there been any significant change in the proportion of oxygen in the atmosphere in the last 150 years? — *Hilary Wright, Victoria, BC, Canada*

WHAT is the derivation of the titles Miss and Mrs? — *John de Waal, Auckland, New Zealand*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. Readers with access to the Internet can respond to Notes & Queries via http://nq.guardian.co.uk

The scent of memories

Paul Evans

AT MISARDEN, a stately pile at the edge of the village of Miserden in Gloucestershire, something wakes from the sleep of memory. Bouncing powerfully from warm, cream gravel between hedges, comes a forgotten but distinctive scent. This is the scent of timeless paths on hot afternoons — the lazy, alluring smell of summer gardens. This is the scent of box, *Buxus sempervirons*, the evergreen shrub trimmed carefully into little hedges around herbaceous borders.

Box flowers smell like cat's pee, but its foliage wrapped in sunshine is far less acrid and always reminds me of gardens I have known. Box bonds gardeners to centuries of tradition. In the Cotswolds, box would have edged the borders of Roman villas along the Fosse Way, the Roman road that formed a frontier between southeast England and the wild lands of the west. The same hedges would have held the monastic apothecary's gardens of the Middle Ages, swirled in complicated patterns in Tudor knot gardens and framed the flower collections of Georgian and Victorian enthusiasts, as they do today.

Although common throughout Britain, box is a native of the chalk and limestone hillsides of southern England. It is this calcareous habitat that makes the Cotswolds so unique. In his poem, "In Praise of Limestone", W H Auden said, "If it form the one landscape that we the inconstant ones/ Are consistently homesick for, this is chiefly/ Because it dissolves in water/ . . . when I try to imagine a faultless love/ Or the life to come, what I hear is the murmur/ Of underground streams, what I see is a limestone landscape."

The long line of Cotswold hills separates the Vale of the Severn in the west and the Vale of the Thames in the east. The oolitic limestone, weathered and folded beneath the centuries-old work of people who shaped the hills and valleys, fields and woods, gives this region its distinctiveness. This rock was formed from the shells of countless creatures that inhabited the mud of a warm, shallow sea millions of years ago. Once a hidden place, rich in sheep fleece and curlew-haunted space, the unique limestone walls, villages and famous gardens of the Cotswolds now attract thousands of visitors who come to see an unspoilt countryside. But is it?

Cars and coaches full of tourists plough with remorseless curiosity and an insatiable desire to travel back to a gentler, romantic version of the past, the homesickness, as Auden put it, of we the "inconstant ones". But is this such a preserved and protected countryside that it has become fossilised, like the stone we come to see? Travelling through chocolate-box villages, what sense do visitors get of the lives of the people who worked this land?

In the old graveyard at Miserden, beyond the immaculate topiary yew arch and the church, is a scattering of lichen-encrusted gravestones. One belongs to the memory of Stanley Marwood Johnson, born 1909, died 1986. The inscription reads: "This soul hath been alone/ on a wide, wide sea/ so lonely 'twas that God himself/ scare seemed there to be." Misery in Miserden? Who was this man and why was he so lonely in such a beautiful place?

Just as the lives of the sea creatures were pressed into this warm stone, so the lives of the people who lived here have become part of the landscape. As the scent of box wafts from the garden the Cotswold countryside sleeps in the sunny afternoon of memory.

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

Chess Leonard Barden

KASPAROV and Fischer head the grandmaster élite who have selected the Grunfeld *1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5* for critical games, and entire books are available on this opening. White's fashionable fourth-move plans are 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 and 4 Nf3, but 4 Bf4, 4 Qb3 and 4 e3 are also playable. A hackneyed, well-trodden position? Sure, yet last month two quite distinct novelties appeared within a few days to expand White's choice.

An unknown Cuban, Francisco Acosta, used Tim Harding's new postal magazine Chess Mail (from 26 Coolamber Park, Dublin 16, tel 353-1-4939339) to recommend *4 b4!?*

This idea is a jazzed-up version of a Soviet master's idea, though Makogonov delayed the pawn push until after 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 e3 0-0. But if Black digs up Makogonov's forties games and meets 4 b4 by *Bg7* 5 e3 0-0 6 Qb3 c6 7 Bd3 e6, Acosta diverges by developing White's KN at e2, followed by 0-0 and Bb2 when, he says, White has consolidated his space advantage.

Black can also respond aggressively. Acosta gives *4 . . . dxc4* 5 e4 e5 6 d5! Bxb4 (Bg7 7 Bxc4 0-0 8 Nge2) 7 Qa4+ Nc6 8 Bd2 Bxc3 9 Bxc3 Nxe4 10 Bxe5 with advantage, but admits that *4 . . . e5!?* 5 c5 (5 dxe5 Bxb4) exd4 6 Nb5 Nc6 7 Bf4 Bg7! 8 Bxc7 (8 Nxc7+ Kf8 9 Nxa8 Ne4 followed by d3 or Qf6) Qd7 9 Bd6 Ne4 10 Nc7+ is unclear.

Although 4 b4 may surprise, it is unlikely to shock Grunfeld players since sacrificing pawns at e5 or c7 are known from other sharp lines. The second anti-Grunfeld novelty, created by the Armenian master Nadanian, is more visually striking: *4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 Na4!?*

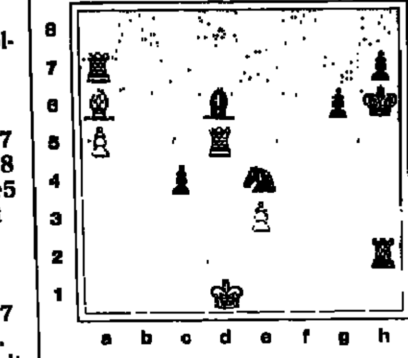
White plans to avoid exchange of knights, control the centre by e4, and to meet the natural retreat Nb6 by Nc5, when the outpost knight cannot be kicked away by b7-b6. Nadanian claims that Black's natural replies to 5 Na4 all favour White:

***Bf5* 6 Nc5 b6 7 e4! or *Nf6* 6 Bf4 Bg7 7 Rc1 c6 8 e3 or *Bg7* 6 e4 Nb6 7 Be3 Nc6 8 d5 Ne5 9 Nc5 c6 10 dxc6 Qxd1+ 11 Rxd1 Nxc6 12 Rd2, or *e6* 6 e4 Nb6 7 Nf3 Nxa4 8 Qxa4+ Bd7 8 Qc2.**

When Nadanian sprung his novelty against Varuzhan Akobian, the 13-year-old found the imaginative counter *5 . . . e5!!* 6 dxe5 Bb4+ 7 Bd2 Ne3! 8 fxe3 Bxd2+ 9 Qxd2 Qh4+ 10 g3 Qxa4 picking up White's errant knight, though the centralising 11 Qd4! gave White the advantage.

Whether or not 4 b4 and 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 Na4 become grandmaster fashion, they show that, even in this era of computer databases, there is still scope to challenge long-standing perceptions at an early stage of play.

No 2469



Lilienthal v Szabo, world-title candidates, Budapest 1950. White (to play) is material up, but his king is in danger. Should he play (a) 1 Bxc4 (b) 1 Rxd6 or (c) 1 Rd7? Grandmaster Lilienthal got it wrong.

No 2468: White takes back K(g4)xR(f5), Black then retracts R(f1)xQ(f5). Instead, Black plays Rh1 and White mates by Qf2.

Bridge Zia Mahmood

WHEN you are defending a bridge hand, there are combinations of cards that ought to sound alarm bells. If you are dealt Q10x in a suit, for example, you are likely to need to do something special with it. This position is well known:

	♠ A 9 4 3	
♠ 8 6 5		♠ Q 10 2
	♠ K J 7	

South, declarer, leads a low card from dummy and finesses the jack when you play low as East. Next, South cashes the king. You should, of course, drop the queen.

On the third round of the suit, declarer must guess whether to play you for an initial holding of Q2 doubleton and finesse dummy's nine. If you play the ten under the king on the second round, declarer cannot go wrong. If you occupy the West seat, and are in the habit of giving count signals, you can follow with the six and then the five, as if you had started with 10 8 6 5.

Another position in which to do something special with Q10x:

	♠ A J 9 8 7	
♠ Q 10 2		♠ K 6 5
	♠ 4 3	

Declarer leads the three from his hand, and you play? This time, you should play the queen. If you don't, declarer will finesse the nine, losing to East's king. A subsequent finesse of the jack will give him four tricks in the suit. But if you put in the queen, declarer may decide to play you for an original holding of KQx.

He might duck the first trick, intending to finesse the jack later, or he may take your queen with the ace, cross to his hand and lead low to the jack. Either way, you have created a chance for the defence to win a trick more than their entitlement. The play of the queen is especially important if dummy has no outside entries, for then you will hold declarer to one trick in the suit as opposed to two — or even four!

One of the more spectacular uses of a Q10x combination occurred in this deal from a recent tournament (see centre table).

	North ♠ K 9 6 ♥ Q J 10 ♦ A J 8 7 5 ♣ Q 6	
West ♠ 7 5 ♥ K 5 ♦ Q 10 4 ♣ 10 9 8 7 4 2		East ♠ J 10 8 4 2 ♥ A 8 7 ♦ 6 3 ♣ K J 5
	South ♠ A Q 3 ♥ 9 6 4 3 2 ♦ K 9 2 ♣ A 3	

Not liking the idea of rebidding his shabby hearts, South opened with a weak no trump and was raised to 3NT by North. West led the ten of clubs, and when this was covered by the queen and king, South had his back to the wall.

Winning with the ace and needing to rattle off the next eight tricks, South led a low diamond towards dummy at the second trick. His intention was to finesse the jack, which would have brought him the five tricks he required without difficulty.

But West contributed the queen of diamonds to the first round! Poor South had no reason to suspect that this was other than a singleton, so he won with dummy's ace of diamonds and led a low diamond for a finesse of the nine. Now the roof fell in on him — West took the nine with the ten and the defenders took five clubs, a diamond and two hearts to defeat the cast-iron contract by four tricks. ©

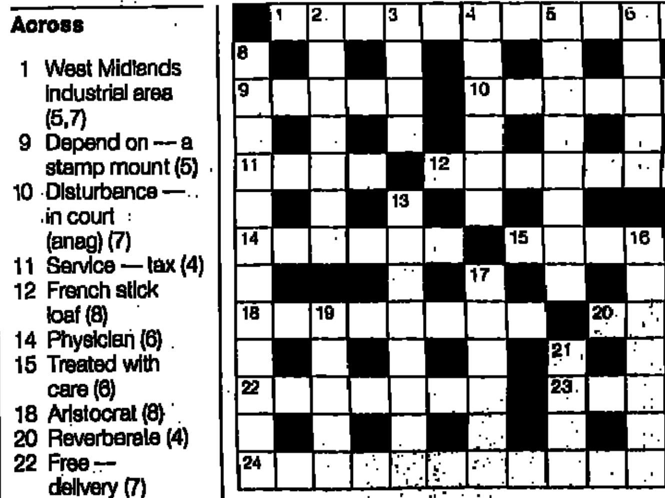
Quick crossword no. 363

Across

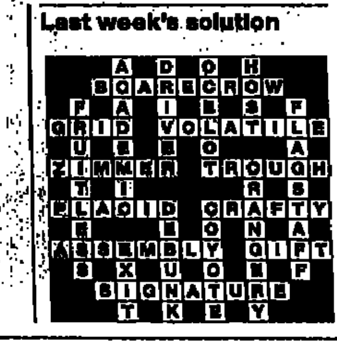
1 West Midlands industrial area (5,7)
9 Depend on — a stamp mount (5)
10 Disturbance — in court (anag) (7)
11 Service — tax (4)
12 French stick loaf (8)
14 Physician (6)
15 Treated with care (6)
18 Aristocrat (8)
20 Reverberate (4)
22 Free — delivery (7)
23 Hearing — test (5)
24 Second part of Bible (3,9)

Down

2 Madmen (7)
3 Cook (4)
4 Cattle enclosure (6)
5 Oily (8)
6 Tobacco — fraud (5)
7 Dandy American (6,6)
8 Large-flowered shrub (12)
13 Alleviate (8)
16 Notices (anag) — part (7)
17 Obvious — protection for inventors (6)
19 Under (5)
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Last week's solution



Woody's one-hit wonder

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

IN AMERICAN, "dance" just about rhymes with "angst", so a musical by Woody Allen ought to be the most natural thing in the world. **Everyone Says I Love You** is a frothy little number that feels as though he casually tossed it off between two cocktails at the Algonquin. Yet it's a peculiar, unsatisfying confection — a Woody Allen film in which the best one-liners are by Cole Porter.

This leisurely uptown romance is remarkably sprawling, even by the usual standards of Allen's ensemble pieces. The cast includes a gaggle of personable, confused teenagers headed by Lukas Haas and narrator Natasha Lyonne; two preppy lovebirds, played by Edward Norton and Drew Barrymore; liberal paterfamilias Alan Alda and his wife Goldie Hawn, party-throwing queen of the uptown radical-chic clique; and Allen himself as Hawn's eternally love-tangled ex. As romantic complications multiply, the leads flit in leisurely style between Manhattan, Paris and Venice, like Henry James characters with frequent-flyer miles.

Allen's own strand of the story takes some believing. Thanks to eavesdropped evidence from her therapist, he contrives to win the heart of beautiful Von — Julia Roberts, no less. Allen and Roberts may be the most improbable love match in all of his films, but here anything's possible, because we're in the world of the musical — which is to say, of fairytale. When characters burst into Broadway bel canto, it hardly comes as any surprise.

Allen doesn't often leave his home territory of Upper Manhattan, so understandably the globetrotting here looks a bit cursory. Paris is the scene for a silly, swanky closing *pas de deux* for him and Hawn, but you wonder why he bothered to go there if all he needed was the Seine as a backdrop and a troupe of Groucho Marx impersonators singing in French.

For all the fun, there's little new here — the film feels like a set of major-key variations on things that Allen has previously done in minor, like the overheard-therapy plot from Another Woman.

Even recently, in out-and-out entertainments like Manhattan Murder Mystery, Allen still contrived to pack a sombre sting; but his latest is as blandly reassuring as comedies get. Admittedly, it's hard to leave this crowd-pleaser without some flicker of a smile. If you like Woody Allen's films, you'll like this.

If, on the other hand, you love them — which means relishing the neurosis, the ethical wranglings — then you'll probably find this something of a throwaway, not to say an irritant. Now, if he really wants to do a musical, Stephen Sondheim probably lives only a few blocks away …

The word "erratic" applies to no one in American cinema quite as it does to Abel Ferrara. It's hard to believe that the same director made a film as focused and perfectly judged as **The Funeral**, and an awkward, portentous exercise like **The Addiction**. Yet both films are straight out of the same well of religious trauma, concern with original sin and the wretchedness of life. Of course, that may be simply to do with living in New York — Ferrara's world is a hellish downtown not even on the same subway line as Woody Allen's stop.

A 1930s-set Mafia saga, The Funeral is more like family melodrama than traditional mob thriller. It's about the effect on the Tempio dynasty when wayward brother Johnny (the excellent, sardonic Vincent Gallo) is killed. Family head Ray — Christopher Walken, glacially authoritative as usual, if muted — seeks retribution, while brother Chez (Chris Penn) begins to bubble over dangerously.

The genre dictates macho energies, but The Funeral is also very much about the women in the gang world. Annabella Sciorra plays Ray's wife as the powerful, angry centre of the family's moral conscience; Isabella Rossellini brings out the reserves of pious determination in Chez's wife Clara. There's also a show-stopping turn from Benicio Del Toro's rival mobster. But it's Penn who walks away with the film, in a very physical performance shaded with distressing vulnerability.

Ferrara is one of the few filmmakers who take violence absolutely seriously, and because the sense of death is so immediately tangible, you accept the more delicate scenes in which Walken attempts to absolve his profession in theological terms.

In The Addiction, however, such casuistry topples over into the absurd. In this 1994 feature, Lili Taylor plays a New York philosophy graduate who takes to a nocturnal blood-sucking existence as if it were postmodern lifestyle chic. The film undeniably has a lot going for it, but the analogy between vampirism and heroin is overworked.

For all its earnestness, The Addiction is little more substantial than Anne Rice, but it does have one thing Interview With The Vampire didn't — music by Nietzsche (yes, that Nietzsche) on the soundtrack.

An English vision of Gallic charm

MUSIC
Caroline Sullivan

NOW, of course, it would hardly raise an eyebrow, let alone anything else. Pop has seen so many extremes, from gangstas to Michael Jackson, that a tremulous little song about having sex simply wouldn't shock.

Even if the two singers did seem to be at it right there in the recording studio, to judge by their gurgles. But in 1969, Jane Birkin and her husband and mentor Serge Gainsbourg invoked the wrath of everyone from the Vatican to the BBC with Je T'Aime Moi Non Plus. It soared to number one, setting the Chelsea deb up for life in her adopted France.

She rarely performs in Britain, hence this first show in three years had "event" writ large. Shame it couldn't have been the scene of her last appearance, the Savoy Theatre, whose intimacy would have suited her better than the Festival Hall's austerity.



Birkin . . . Sad songs for Serge

A small thing in white vest and tight black jeans, she was swamped by the large stage, with only a subdued French backing band for company. Birkin is holding up better at 50 than her surprisingly young fans are at 25.

Her devotion to the late singer/songwriter was obvious from her frequent references to Gainsbourg during a set comprised of his material. She plainly is still bereft by his absence, and her loss gradually became ours over the course of 90 minutes.

"I last heard that when it was read by Deneuve in a little graveyard where Serge is," she said at the end of one number, and we stifled a sob.

Whatever Gainsbourg's merits, he wasn't a flawless songwriter. That did not stop Birkin from exhuming some of his least becoming numbers. He had a typically French feel for rock music — he was hopeless at it.

But quintessentially French balladry with strings and accordion stuck on? Now you're talking. It was during these — the likes of Baby Alone In Babylone and Sorry Angel — that Birkin was at once most connected to Gainsbourg and most free of his influence.

Waxing lyrical about still lives

ART
Adrian Searle

WHAT ghastly people these Americans are, with their appalling clothes, their flab and sweat and suet thighs, their smug stupidity and empty lives. Whatever possessed them to wander into the Saatchi's hallowed halls of art in north London? They're sculptures. Duane Hanson, who died last year, was a maker of almost perfect replicas of human beings. So life-like are they that they are often, when first encountered, mistaken for the real, living thing. Cast from life, painted, be-wigged, dressed in everyday clothes and posed among real objects, they achieve a verisimilitude — and a presence — at least equal to the wax-work dummies in Madame Tussaud's.

Duane Hanson's wax sculpture Traveller conforms to a dumbed-down stereotype

They sag and sweat, and are demonstrably weighed down by worldly cares. They have bad taste, bad hair, bad diets and bad times. Pooped-out, a slobbish traveller slumps on his luggage. Rita the waitress leans against the wall, too tired and indolent to take your order. An old guy sits on a bench, staring into nothingness, considering — what, exactly? His pension, his prostate, the state of the world? He is both the most reticent and anonymous, and the most achieved sculpture here. The two things are not unconnected.

You wouldn't want to hang around with most of these people, yet they draw you in, with their almost complete realism. And up close, the illusion persists in the details: blotchy necks, a bruised shin, sunburn and collagen. And, like the figures in Madame Tussaud's, we recognise them. We've seen them before; they're regular Americans. Hanson, a Minnesota farmer's son who worked in Florida, died in January 1996. He was immensely popular in America, Japan, Germany and Scandinavia. Though he was never afforded a British solo show during his lifetime, he was well-known in Britain through reproductions, and for the single work acquired for a British public collection — Hanson's 1970 Tourists, in the National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh.

Hanson began making his life-cast figures in 1967, and spent the following 30 years honing his skills and refining his techniques. Apart from a few dramatic and overtly politicised multiple-figure early works — notably Riot, from 1967, and Bowery Derelicts, from 1969, he spent his career producing single and double-figure sculptures depicting ordinary Americans at work and play. His figures appear to be near-faultless representations, until one looks a little longer. But, by and large, Hanson's realism, mostly rendered in polyester plastics, car bodyfiller, flecked paint and false hair, is as impressive as it is banal. And that's the point: banal sculptures, banal people. His sculpture appeals to those who believe that art should imitate life, and who confuse the real and the realistic.

Hanson, who felt that overweight models were "more sculptural", had a lingering, if simplistic, social conscience, and deceived himself with disingenuous claims of empathy towards his subjects.

Hanson was a sort of downbeat Norman Rockwell for the TV age. His figures avoid eye-contact, and there's no gaze in their blank stares. In fact, we find ourselves in a kind of non-confrontation, a passing: unlike the work of Stephan Balkenhol, whose figurative sculptures Saatchi has also bought and shown, there's nothing in Hanson's work beyond the surface. His figures wallow in the depths of their psychological shallows. Their emptiness is a kind of existential cliché. Their presence is bolstered and encumbered with props and extraneous detail, leaving no space for human ambiguity and distance.

The issue of realism and likeness in the sculpture of human beings continues to be a central concern — along with questions of scale, surface finish, expression and a host of issues to do with materiality and presence. Hanson's continuing interest, for other artists, rests not in his solutions but almost entirely in his technique, his *trompe-l'oeil* effects. And instead of making inexpressiveness his subject, he treated his figures as clothes-horses, to be livened up with props — real shopping bags, baby push-chairs, cameras and wristwatches. Giacometti said, in regard to sculptured figures, that too great an illusion of being real would leave the viewer amazed primarily that the piece couldn't move. Hanson's affectless figures are modern genre-types, overblown knick-knacks that pay no more than lip-service to either social or self-awareness. They are life-like, but lack life, and that is their failure, both as sculptures and as social commentaries. Unless, that is, one looks at them as narratives of loss, but somehow I don't think that is what Hanson had in mind.

A fantasy in Theatre-land

Adrian Noble salutes Michael Billington's brave attempt at turning from theatre critic to director

APPROACHING BAC on gentrified Lavender Hill in Battersea, in my first, and, I trust, last job as a theatre critic, I wondered what agenda I should be addressing. The plays? Well yes, of course, Strindberg's The Stronger and Harold Pinter's The Lover (both interesting and important, well worth an outing and fascinatingly paired); the actors (I saw Sian Thomas and John Michie were in the cast — highly experienced, classy); the production (Michael Billington — a blank, my lord); fringe theatre (always with us, like the poor); or perhaps even the function of the critic.

Well I must report that it was a rum do, even before the show started. Groups of critics huddled around their colleague director-critics, glancing nervously over their shoulders, clearly quizzing them about their experiences: what was it like? Did you go all the way? Upstairs, some awkward joshing at the bar, a few muttered, "How the hell did I get myself involved in this?" Then into the theatre.

First let me say, this was hardcore fringe. I mean mainline stuff. Addicts will be reassured, sitting on the rock-hard seats, to see the black box, the isolated furniture on the black floor, the white cut-out set against the black wall, and the single red fire-extinguisher in pride of place beneath the brightly lit exit sign.

And we could rest assured that the actors, in the prime of their careers, were almost certainly being paid a pittance. Then the play began — and so did the monologue. No, not the monologue so cunningly created by Strindberg in this play for two characters, only one of whom speaks a word, but the monologue in my head, a stream of thought flowing alongside Sian Thomas's words, ducking in and out, unstoppable: "No, Sian, more relaxed at first, more conversational; the relationship's not clear. Engage with her, don't . . ." I stopped myself. I was directing the wretched thing.

Is this what professional theatre critics do, I wondered? Is that what the job is, a theatrical equivalent of fantasy football? In which case this job-swap experiment is clearly a good thing, as it can only make our critics better fantasy directors.

The critic, it strikes me, has three principal functions. The first is to deliver the news. Is this production or play worth going to see? Second, to inform a reader what is going on in the arts world, to create over a period of months an informed theatrical atlas. And third, to contribute at the highest possible level to the debate. The end of overnight reviewing in all bar one national newspaper is not so much a reflection of the fact that theatre is no longer news, as a major contribution to that fact. Theatre can't be news if it doesn't appear on the news pages. This is not just theatre's loss, but society's loss, as important cultural events slide down the agenda.

So is this Strindberg-Pinter double-bill an important cultural event? I think not, although it is an astute and elegant juxtaposition.

Sian Thomas and John Michie in Pinter's The Lover

Strindberg wrote The Stronger in 1888 for his projected Experimental Theatre in Copenhagen, and Pinter The Lover for Associated Rediffusion Television in 1963, when there was still a place on TV for experimental grown-up drama.

Strindberg was not only the godfather of the fringe as we know it, but the master chef of the two staple meals of the fringe — realism and expressionism. The black box was at once his theatrical playground and a metaphor for the landscape inside his head. Strindberg was a lethal player at the deadly game of sexual politics. You need a hand as steady as a surgeon to direct him, but Michael Billington's production is, alas, too clumsy. Rather than potential dialogue, where one person's thought, matched moment for moment by another's silence, lead to devastating revelation, we get the dreaded monologue. We are in Theatre-land, we are in Experiment-land. Beam me up, Scotty.

Sian Thomas is good casting as the one with all the words, she's intelligent and conducts us skilfully on her journey, but Kim Thomson plays her role as a supporting part, which is a mistake. It's by far the more difficult.

The lights go down, we shuffle about for a bit then, bang, we're on Pinter. At first my heart sank. Husband kisses wife goodbye as if he's never met her before, stilted acting, monotonous typewriter delivery. God help me. I'm in funnyland again! But, no, I was wrong. This is a wonderful play, a great minor play to borrow one of T S Eliot's backhanded compliments. It's a courageous effort on behalf of Billington and his cast, and a very thought-provoking match with Strindberg.

This is Pinter still close to the brilliant, brittle revue sketch writer of the 1950s. Yes, we realise once again, Pinter is the most European of our post-war writers; he's first cousin to the French Absurdists, and Strindberg's natural heir.

Like Strindberg, Pinter's plays occupy a parallel landscape. The Lover is set both in the bedroom and living-room of a suburban house, and in the erotic landscape of role play and sexual fantasy. Like Strindberg, Pinter knows this is the most exciting and the most dangerous of all playgrounds.

By the end of the evening, Sian Thomas and John Michie had convinced me. But the whole doesn't quite plug in. Why? Well, I don't think Michael Billington is a very good director.

I think he's a very fine critic, and it's mainly out of respect for him that I'm writing this piece. But he's not an artist. I'm sure he understands the plays profoundly. But can he marry the form to the meaning, can he lose himself in the work, can he listen to his instincts, humble himself to the Gods, to the creators? Can he dine with Apollo and Dionysus? Well, I don't know many people who can. But if you hear about any, please put them on the inside news page.

Adrian Noble is artistic director of the Royal Shakespeare Company

Billington on Billington



Billington has been accused of timidity in his choice of plays, but there are intriguing links between the two works: while the Strindberg is full of Pinteresque silences, the Pinter conceals a good deal of Strindbergian angst. Billington's obvious inexperience as a director is also camouflaged by some fine performances. Clearly the actors did most of the work, and I'd definitely advise Billington not to give up his night-job.

All in all, the full Monte

OPERA
Andrew Clements

WHEN stagings of Monteverdi's operas get it right, as Annabel Arden's The Return Of Ulysses most certainly does, they can make the 350 years of operatic history since the composer's death seem utterly dispensable. All the properties we prize most in musical drama — the perfect fusion of text and music, the economy of gesture, the faultless control of dramatic pacing, the psychological penetration of the characters — are all there, fully realised, in a work like Ulysses, and needing just an imaginative, sensitive combination of director and conductor to tease it out.

Arden's version, acutely, lyrically conducted by Harry Bicket, has precisely that. It started life at the Buxton Festival three years ago, but has been honed and refined for this revival, which starts a spring season for Opera North in Leeds, that will also include new productions of Tannhäuser, Cosi Fan Tutte and Korngold's Violanta, making up a wonderfully varied package that puts the company's more generously funded London siblings to shame.

If they all turn out to be of the same perceptiveness and musical excellence as this, it will be a memorable series. Arden's treatment, mingling ancient classicism and modern manners in a way that always ensures the narrative line of the work remains perfectly clear, is a fresh, resourceful take on Monteverdi's masterpiece.

There are echoes of Arden's work with Théatre de Complicité, including the superbly conceived portrayal of the work's main comic creation, the glutton Irus (stormingly played by Valentin Jar as a monstrous automaton bulging out of his designer trousers). But there is much, much more that arises out of her and her singers' responses to the words and to their setting. Gestures that alternate casual naturalism with severe stylisation are perfectly chosen for each dramatic situation; the weave of the drama is constantly varied, its pulse carefully regulated.

Tim Hatley's split-tiered set provides exactly the dramatic flexibility such an approach demands. A room in Penelope's palace is on the upper level, and the outer world, threateningly dark, is down below. Minerva descends from the flies on a winged and gilded chair to return Telemachus to his father Ulysses and to orchestrate their return to the palace, but otherwise spectacle for its own sake is minimised. This is a functional, spare treatment that allows the drama to speak for itself.

That places additional responsibility on the singers, and it's in the casting that the greatest improvements over the Buxton performances can be found, especially in the role of Ulysses, where Nigel Robson's performance is so effective. Each emotional twist and turn of the hero's progress towards reunion with Penelope is graphed upon his face in an immensely moving way.

Robson is well matched by Alice Coote's statuesque Penelope, who makes the final scene and her reluctance to acknowledge that her husband has returned after 10 years a tangle of conflicting emotions.

There is a clear, forthright Telemachus from Nicholas Sears and touching Eumaeus from Mark Curtis; Thérese Feighan is the *dea ex machina* Minerva in shimmering evening dress. But all, as in the best Monteverdi, are fused into a powerful dramatic unity.

The trials of a juror

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

HE WAS the only man among the jurors describing the experience in **Modern Times** (BBC2). His name may or may not be David. Some of the names were changed because some of the jurors were frightened. He didn't look frightened and he didn't look like a David, more like a Dave.

He is, in fact, an AA man. The man who can.

So it was all the more disturbing how overwhelming he found jury service and how vividly he described the distress of body and mind.

It was a murder trial. A young couple had been killed, the woman as she dialled 999. Her dying breath on tape sounded like a child babbling. The operator repeated patiently, "If there's a problem, can you get your mummy?"

All the clichés are true — that's why they are clichés. David's blood ran cold. "That night I kept saying to my wife, 'Why isn't the heating on? Turn the heating up.' She kept talking to me and I kept saying, 'Pardon?' Someone was speaking but I didn't hear the words. I knew that day had been too much for me, I had a drink. I had a big drink. I wanted to go to sleep, to forget. And it worked."

There was a hole at the heart of this documentary. The secrecy of the jury room is so absolute that jurors stagger under it like a guilty secret.

But after the guilty verdict, they all went back into the room and we went with them. "Everybody's sitting there sobbing. For five weeks nobody had had any physical contact but there were people cuddling, holding hands, saying goodbyes. We were in that room for an hour before we could compose ourselves enough to leave the court. It was . . . horrible. We needed to cry. If you don't cry, you get worse, don't you?"

He had been blinking rapidly and now he squeezed his eyes shut and shook his head violently like a dog coming out of deep water.

The wonderful **Home Front** (BBC2) gets better every week.

First a sabre-toothed woman arrives, junks your furniture and insults your bedroom: "God! Have we got our work cut out here!"

Then she makes you spray your wardrobe gold and stick pink fake fur on it. You have a perfectly nice oak mirror. It is painted gold, sweets are stuck all round it and it is finished off with pink fur.

Fair play, as Jim McDonald says, this was a room for a teenager, who conceded her mum was not impressed. This suffering woman did not show.

Meanwhile why not paint your plain china with chickens and bake it in the oven? Next week Kevin will show you how to make a chandelier out of an old bicycle wheel.

School of rhymes

Ian Sansom

The School Bag
ed Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes
Faber and Faber 590pp £20hbk
£12.99pbk

THIS BOOK is a big event. Fifteen years after the publication of their first co-edited poetry anthology, The Rattle Bag, Heaney and Hughes have teamed up again to produce a sequel. Of course, a lot of things have happened since 1982: poets have come and gone, reputations risen and fallen; Hughes has been made Poet Laureate, Heaney has won the Nobel Prize for Literature. Back in the early eighties, the collaboration between two Faber poets seemed fortuitous, but hardly momentous. Now, as Laureate and Nobelist, the collaboration seems extraordinary, a publishing coup. Such writers don't just make books, they make history, and theirs is an awesome responsibility; from those to whom much is given much is expected in return.

So The School Bag is, by definition, an important book, but readers should be warned: it is a very different book from the much-loved Rattle Bag. The title itself sounds a warning. School bag implies the ceremonials and rituals of learning: instruction, training, discipline, correction. Rattle bag implies rummaging and noise, the raucous delights of miscellany.

The School Bag is streamlined and serious, and sets out a curriculum and a canon; it represents, says Heaney, a "school of poetry . . . gathered on traditional bardic lines", exposure to which will contribute to "the schooling of its readers". This may seem far removed from the original spirit of anthologising — the word comes from the Greek *anthologos*, which means flower-gathering — but it is nonetheless a legitimate purpose and reflects a commercial reality. There are still good anthologies and bad anthologies, just as there are good schools and bad. And if it's schooling you want, if it's an anthology you want, then stick with the Laureates.

It begins with Yeats's "Long Legged Fly", from his Last Poems, a poem which invites the reader to contemplate the difficult task of schooling that is to follow.

Like a long-legged fly upon the stream
His mind moves upon silence.

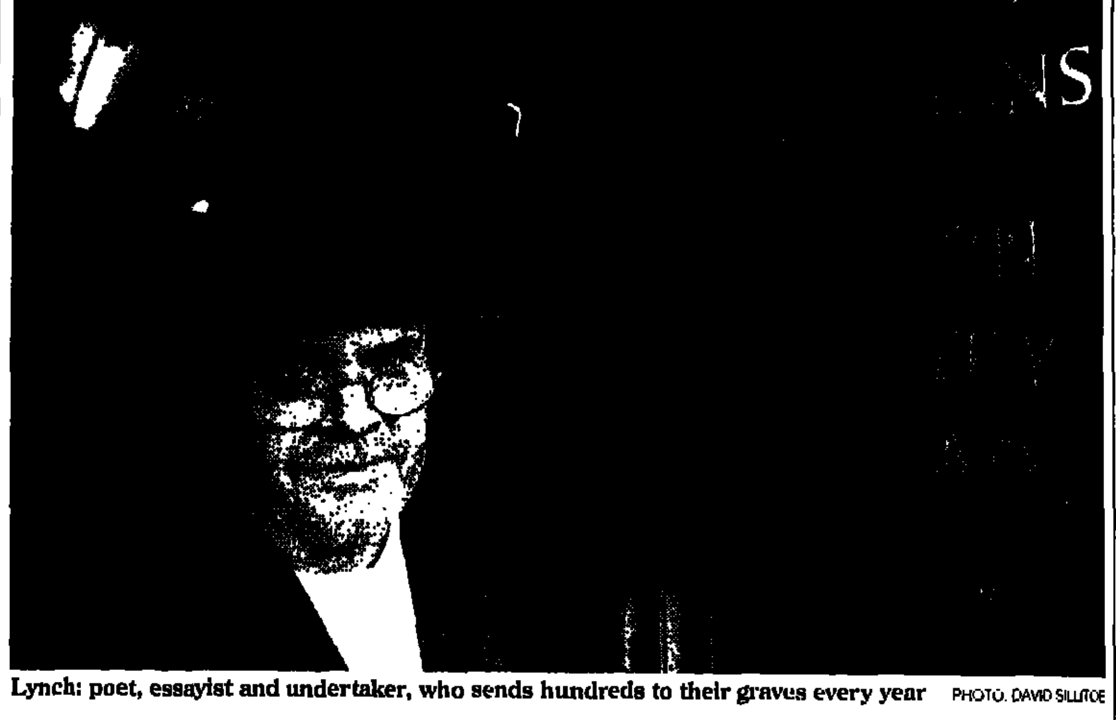
The book ends with an excerpt from Dryden's "The Secular Masque", the refrain "All, all of a piece throughout" neatly rounding things up and ushering the reader out. In between come hundreds of poems, long and short, old and new — the whole of "The Dream of the Rood", the whole of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came", great tranches of King Lear and Ovid's Metamorphoses, generous excerpts from Kavanagh's The Great Hunger and Skelton's "Philip Sparrow", and choice slices of "The Ballad of Reading Gaol".

There is a strict rule of one poem per poet, which allows for much wider coverage than in The Rattle Bag and provides for welcome appearances not only from the likes of Basil Bunting, but also from Anne Bradstreet, Louise Bogan, Hart and Stephen Crane, David Gascoyne, Ivor Gurney, Marianne Moore, Edwin Morgan and Frank O'Hara.

There is one other major difference between the two anthologies, one which exposes The School Bag's essential flaw. The Rattle Bag organised its poems alphabetically by title, which was an unusual means of organisation but which made for interesting juxtapositions: Norman MacCaig's sad "Aunt Julia", for example, was followed by Adrian Mitchell's freewheeling "Autobahnmotorwayautoroute", which then segued into MacNeice's "Autobiography", and juddered into Karl Shapiro's "Auto Wreck".

The poems in the new anthology are classified according to theme — sea, land, death, etc — which is a sure sign of the shift in the poets' attitude and intentions: "To have done it thematically", they wrote in The Rattle Bag, "would have made it feel too much like a textbook". The School Bag is very much like a textbook, so themes are permissible, but surely still inadvisable — isn't there always something rather sinister about poems herded together and grouped by theme, something ghastly, and something dull? Maybe it's a quibble — The School Bag is a marvellous book, and greatly to be welcomed, but there's no getting away from the fact, which is always worth restating: schooling is not the same thing as education.

A copy of this book is available at a special price of £16hbk or £9.99pbk from Books @ The Guardian Weekly



Lynch: poet, essayist and undertaker, who sends hundreds to their graves every year PHOTO: DAVID SILLITOE

The man who has the final word

Desmond Christy discusses life, death and 'the dismal trade' with poet Thomas Lynch

YOU WILL meet Thomas Lynch, or the like of him, when you are dead. But you won't know a thing about it. So let me introduce you to him now, before it is too late to get to know him properly. Lynch is a funeral director and a poet from a little town called Milford, Michigan. "Every year," he tells us at the start of his newly published collection of essays, "I bury a couple of hundred of my townspeople. Another two or three dozen I take to the crematory to be burned. I sell caskets, burial vaults, and urns for the ashes. I have a sideline in headstones and monuments."

We know his type, then. Didn't Jessica Mitford warn us about his kind in The American Way Of Death, the kind that was too quick to see healthy profits in the customer being permanently horizontal? She said it was barbaric, "fussing over the dead body".

Lynch's essays, The Undertaking, Life Studies From The Dismal Trade, see it all very differently to Mitford (who passed over last year). "As I watch my generation labour to give their teenagers and young adults some 'family values' between courses of pizza and Big Macs, I think maybe Gladstone had it right. I think my father did.

"They understood that the meaning of life is connected, inextricably, to the meaning of death; that mourning is romance in reverse, and if you love, you grieve, and there are no exceptions — only those who do it well, and those who don't. And if death is regarded as an inconvenience, if the dead are regarded as a nuisance from whom we seek a hurried riddance, then life and the living are in for like treatment: McFunerals, McFamilies, McMarriage, McValues."

I didn't order a McSermon, you may say. I don't need to be told that "where death means nothing, life is meaningless". But Lynch has looked into more coffins than you or I. He tells of an embalmer called Wesley Rice. "Wesley once spent all of one day and all night carefully piecing together the parts of a girl's cranium. She'd been murdered by a madman with a baseball bat after he'd abducted and raped her . . . Eighteen hours later the girl's mother, who had pleaded to see her, saw her. She was dead and damaged; but her face was hers again, not the madman's version. The hair was hers, not his. The body was hers, not his. Wesley Rice had not raised her from the dead nor hidden the hard facts, but he had retrieved her death from the one who killed her."

It is Lynch's job, as an undertaker, to help the living with the dead. It is not the corpses that interest him. "I've never had the dead person write the cheque. There's always one dead guy per funeral and there's 150 other people and they are really interesting."

As we walk we talk about faith, about Lynch having so much of it and me having none at all, thinking the stuff he believes in as being as improbable as a spaceship hiding behind Hale-Bopp.

It is Lynch's job, as an undertaker, to help the living cope with the dead. Corpses don't interest him

Lynch — "Some days I'm sure of God, some days I'm not" — explains that, for him, even when you are raising your fist to denounce the Almighty and his cruelties you are showing faith in the existence of your maker. You have only to read his poems to know that Lynch must have spent a great deal of time raising his fist to his maker.

The Lynch you meet in The Undertaking is wise and funny about life and death. But there was an earlier Lynch, angry at his broken marriage, and knocking back the Irish whiskey. He wrote a poem, called "For the ex-wife on the occasion of her birthday". It begins: "Let me say outright that I bear you no/unusual malice anymore. Nor/do I wish for you tumours or loose stools,/blood in your urine, oozings from any orifice."

The whiskey and the unusual malice are both back in an abandoned bottle. Lynch's parents presented him with a choice as a child. His father, also an undertaker, spent his life worrying that his children would end up as dead as the children he had to bury as part of his work. But Lynch's mother ("a Bing Crosby and Ingrid Bergman Catholic") had faith that triumphed over his father's fear. Lynch has stopped worrying about his children and found that they flourish without his worry.

I ask Lynch what he would have done if he had not become a funeral director. A teacher, perhaps, but that would have meant teaching literature to students, as most of America's professional writers do. "What would there be to write about?" His job gives him experience other writers can only dream about and no, he isn't going to give up his funeral business. Folks in Milford are relying on him.

And while Milford may look "in the right light, like a late-century rendition of the Waltons or Lake Wobegon" there is "no shortage of outrage and heartbreak". The Milford region even had its own serial killer. But small-town America still survives and The Undertaking is, in part, a testament to it and the kinds of values it sustains — like knowing the man who may one day bury you. And relying on him. Undertakers, as Lynch's father used to say, are after all "the last ones to let you down".

Lynch has to sign some books at the Notting Hill branch of Waterstones. The shop window has been decked out with a coffin and candles. Lynch tells me about an historical pageant they hold in Milford, part of which involved a tour of the town's oldest cemetery. As you walked through it, people would pop out from behind gravestones, dressed as one of the town's long deceased and start telling their histories. Some people loved it; others thought it was tacky sacrilege. Lynch was asked to adjudicate in the dispute. He said he was agin it: "The dead don't have to entertain nobody," he told them. But the living . . .

The living are those who have time to read The Undertaking and be greatly entertained. Don't forget, this may be the last book you ever read.

The Undertaking by Thomas Lynch, is published by Cape £9.99; Grimalkin & Other Poems, Cape £7

New fiction

Lucy Atkins

Ingenious Pain, by Andrew Miller (Sceptre, £14.99)

A TRUE rarity: a debut novel which is original, memorable, engrossing and subtle. The hero, James Dyer, is born with no feeling for pain and grows into an observer of life, negotiating the heaving and diseased 18th century world around him where, as a child, his siblings die from smallpox, his mother rejects him, and he is exploited by a fairground quack. He becomes a renowned surgeon, and as he rushes to St Petersburg to inoculate the Russian empress Catherine against smallpox, he meets a woman with supernatural powers who introduces him to pain. The ensuing emotional agony drives him mad, leaving him suffering in a London mental institution, before he pieces himself back together. As the narrative loops and ducks ingeniously, pain emerges as a creative, restorative force. A fine tale.

Andorra, by Peter Cameron (Fourth Estate, £8.99)

CAMERON also chooses a "micro-nation" as his setting, presumably for its claustrophobic and symbolic potential. Seeking solitude and a new start in life, Alexander Fox moves from America to Andorra, where he is sucked into the sad lives of a few ex-pats, all of whom seem to be trying to escape their pasts, just as Fox is trying to escape bad memories of a dead wife and child. But Andorra is more a prison than a refuge. The aptly named Fox turns out to be a shady character; his new friends maladjusted individuals in search of lost love. An atmospheric, if rather alienating, read.

Does It Show?, by Paul Magrs (Chatto, £9.99)

LIZ and her daughter Penny move to a council estate, "Phoenix Court", where Liz stands out as glamorous and somehow different from the other mothers. Just how different she really is, is the central revelation, her originality rising from the ashes of the poverty-stricken community alongside Penny's growing supernatural powers. "What does it mean?" characters ask themselves and each other. Magrs's answer is that, ultimately, meaning (particularly sexual meaning) is, as Liz puts it, "all in the eye of the beholder".

The Time In Aderra, by Ann Schlee (Macmillan, £15.99)

SET in a fictional British protectorate, this is a novel about Britishness, played out in microcosm by the community of ex-pats, as observed by 17-year-old Flo. She is flown out to spend the summer with her lonely mother Lydia and stepfather, who is preparing to hand Aderra back to the "natives". The "threat of violence" in Aderra being "ever present, ever suppressed", there is little menace or tension in the novel.

St Just of the jungle

Robin Blackburn

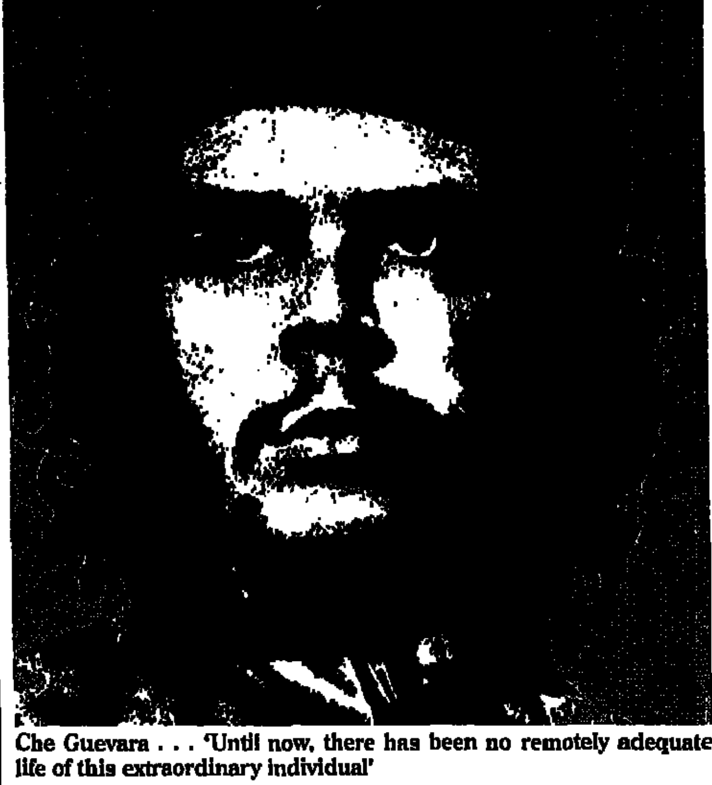
Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life
by John Lee Anderson
Bantam 814pp £25

CHE GUEVARA helped Fidel Castro to topple Batista in 1959 and then masterminded Cuba's break with the United States. These events established him as a revolutionary statesman of global reputation. With his subsequent renunciation of the fruits of power and martyr's death in Bolivia in 1967, he became a legend. The smouldering prose of his diaries and essays explained why the man in the iconic poster felt that it was necessary for him to sacrifice his life for the wretched of the earth. Until now, there has been no remotely adequate life of this extraordinary individual.

John Lee Anderson opens this book by declaring: "My sole loyalty is to Che Guevara himself," adding that his concern is "his truth not anyone else's". My fear that this heralded a hagiography soon vanished. Anderson shows no hesitation in detailing episode after episode in which Guevara, or the causes he worked for, is shown in an uncomfortable or unattractive light. He has researched diligently and has had access to much unpublished documentation.

Anderson is not, in fact, notably sympathetic to Guevara's politics, nor does he do more than sketch the appalling social conditions and political crimes which drove Guevara from medicine to revolutionary politics. Yet this biography is nevertheless absorbing and convincing because of its wealth of new information and willingness to let Guevara himself speak, in quotations from letters and diaries.

By the closing chapters the full tragedy and nobility of Guevara's last actions are, if anything, heightened by our knowledge of his mistakes and failings. Even those responsible for hunting him down appear to have rued their own actions.



Che Guevara . . . 'Until now, there has been no remotely adequate life of this extraordinary individual'

Anderson punctures the romantic view of guerrilla war by detailing the draconian punishment meted out to deserters. Guevara was himself a stern disciplinarian, a trait rendered only somewhat more acceptable by the fact that he demanded even more of himself than of others. Following Batista's flight Guevara became commander of La Cabana, Havana's principal fort, from where he oversaw the trial of several hundred Batista henchman; of these 55 were executed.

According to Anderson, Guevara strove to ensure that these men really were guilty of the brutalities alleged against them; his judicial procedures, rudimentary as they were, prevented the lynch law that would otherwise have prevailed. For Guevara, the winding up of the old military machine was itself the indispensable preliminary to social revolution.

On this account Guevara was already attracted to Marxism and Maoism before he joined up with the Cubans. In a remarkable text of 1956, quoted here, he wrote: "The future belongs to the people and little by little or in one fell swoop they will seize power, here and in the whole world. The bad thing is that they have to become civilised and this can't happen before, but only after taking power." Che, the son of Argentine bourgeois, concluded that his mission was to become a sort of latterday Saint-Just who would submerge himself in what he called, in a typically arresting and disturbing phrase, "the bestial howling of the triumphant proletariat".

In a continent afflicted by hunger and dictatorship, and with exorbitant rates of infant mortality, Guevara's driven personality and longing for social redemption corresponded to palpable needs. But his apocalyptic streak would lead to grave misjudgment, as when he appeared willing to risk war in 1962 rather than accept that the Soviet missile withdrawal had reduced the danger of invasion.

Guevara's last exploits in the Congo and Bolivia can also be read in two ways. Tactically they were, of course, ill advised and even shambolic. But in both countries military dictatorship loomed and serious oppositional forces were engaged. In resisting Tshombe and Mobutu, or seeking to ally himself with Bolivia's insurgent miners, Che skimped the necessary preparation — but he was not strategically mistaken. Today, Laurent Kabila is at last ousting the monstrous kleptocrat whom the West backed in Zaire.

Anderson reminds us that Che, while at times fanatically intolerant of real or supposed weakness in himself or others, was nevertheless strikingly broad-minded — his ministry became a refuge for stubborn liberals, anarchistic Trotskyists and other oddballs whose independence of mind he cherished.

Unsurprisingly, Guevara could be guilty of a crude machismo, but this complex individual was also capable of great tenderness and withering self-criticism. John Lee Anderson has written an indispensable work of contemporary history and conveyed much of his subject's awkward grandeur.

The Moggach cake-mix

Katy Emck

Close Relations
by Deborah Moggach
Heinemann 356pp £15.99

DEBORAH Moggach's new novel opens with a family history so brisk and brief it reads like a journalistic profile with a bit of social history thrown in. She whips through a 40-year marriage, the birth and upbringing of three girls and its changing social background in four pages, throwing in stereotypes like ingredients in some Middle England cake mix.

But she's the Fanny Craddock, rather than the Delia Smith (that's Joanna Trollope), of the family saga. Sexier, cruder, more extreme. She sets up her social icons only to detonate them. No one comes off looking too good. Or too bad, for that matter. There's something refreshingly amoral about her take on family relations at the close of the century. Everyone's a-lusting and a-yearning when they shouldn't be, and Moggach's portrait of a family coming apart at the seams has dark humour and considerable energy. "Treacherous husbands, treacherous wives, treacherous grandparents," cries the book cover, like a lewdly wagging finger.

On a magazine-spread Sunday in a plush, Home Counties residence, three generations of a made-good family are gathered for lunch. Dark hints that all is not as cosy as it seems fall thick and fast, and we soon find that the thirty-something daughter of Gordon the Builder, Prudence — "the quiet one, the bluestocking" — is having a torrid affair with her married boss; that her sister, do-gooding Maddy, is a lesbian; and that his third daughter, lucky Louise with the luxury home and family, is cruising for the biggest bruiser of all.

While this is predictable family saga territory — down to the coming-out relationship, the geriatric sex and the dysfunctional teenagers — Moggach is particularly good at setting up expectations then surprising you. Like a Lady Fate giving Fortune's Wheel some good, hard spins, she loves to show us that no life is predictable and no marriage safe.

The novel's dramatic irony, taut plotting and broad, searching social canvas compensate for its flaws. Close Relations has a briskly dark sense of life's impermanence and of the unsanctioned desires that threaten all our fortresses. Its diagnosis of contemporary life has a tough optimism. Her people are jaunty among the ruins, and they keep on building after "the dry rot, the tasks. The building of a home only to find that its occupants have fled."

City of love vampires

Maya Jaggi

Love in a Blue Time
by Hanif Kureishi
Faber 212pp £8.99

HANIF KUREISHI'S south London boys, who partied through adolescence in a welter of sex and drugs in his earlier novels, have been fast-forwarded into middle age in his collection of stories, Love In A Blue Time. "Life had become like a party at the end of the world," one reflects. "He was sick of it, as one may grow sick of champagne or of kicking a dead body."

This collection charts desire, its eclipse, and the impulse to flee, to renew its pulse. "Without thinking, he gave her his life. He valued it less then, and now he wants it back. But he knows that retrieving a life takes a different courage, and is crueller."

Kureishi also trawls obsessive tenderness and pathos, as in the anonymous sexual arrangement of "Nightlight", and a curious sadness: "Most of his friends, most of the people he knows are on the move from wife to wife, husband to husband, lover to lover. A city of love vampires . . . hunting the one who will make the difference." At his best in dialogue and deadpan humour, he can be deflatingly funny about sex — the painstaking routine of a man seducing his wife ("He knew she was finally conquered when she stopped watching television") or the physical rigours of passion itself.

These stories borrow from Chekhov, Nabokov, Kafka, Bertolucci. But, though sometimes facile or over-explicit, their freshness lies in an insistent observation of the present. There are hangovers from Thatcher's enterprise culture, like the pugnacious hamburger entrepreneur Vance, and assorted low-life — dealers, misfits, parasites — who stalk a recognisable London, from Soho to Ladbroke Grove. Old women in overcoats resemble "lagged boilers on little feet"; a drug dealer lounges with tight-trousered crotch exposed "as if he anticipated applause".

In "With Your Tongue Down My Throat", a predatory writer, parasitically assuming the voice of a girl, deflects accusations of ripping off friends: "I shove it all down shamelessly (and add bits) because it's my job to write down the things that happen round here and because I have a rule about no material being sacred. What does that make me? . . . an old spy, a dirty betrayer with a loudspeaker."

Kureishi's own compulsion to hold nothing back is still evident in this collection. But his distinctive voice has acquired an intriguing wistfulness.

Rugby Union Courage League One: Wasps 36 Sale 10

Wasps' buzz of glory

Robert Armstrong

WASPS gave a stunning demonstration of the qualities that have made them champions-elect, sweeping aside ambitious Sale at Loftus Road on Sunday with four tries to restore their five-point lead. One point from their last two games, away to Northampton and Harlequins, will be sufficient to give them the title they last won seven years ago.

Any suspicion that Sale would lay an ambush in Wasps' own backyard was swiftly dispelled, particularly when their fly-half Simon Mannix left the field after 15 minutes with a back injury. In effect the match was over in 43 minutes when Wasps' characteristic non-stop football produced three tries in a coruscating 10-minute spell either side of half-time, giving them a 30-3 lead which Sale never looked like pulling back.

It says much for Wasps' positive attitude behind the scrum that all their three-quarters — Henderson, Logan, Roiser and Greenstock — scored. The breathtaking continuity in their attacks was the perfect answer to those rival clubs who damned the Londoners as a "workmanlike outfit".

Wasps seized the initiative after only eight minutes with a brilliant try that owed everything to their willingness to take on opponents one to one whenever a half-chance presented itself. Shortly after Greenstock had stormed to within metres of the Sale line, Wasps were awarded a penalty for offside and Henderson took a quick tap before holding off two defenders to score in the left corner.



Outpouring tap . . . Henderson charges through for Wasps' first try from a quickly taken penalty PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID ROGERS

Sale responded with an exciting series of precisely constructed attacks that underlined their ability to recycle the ball under pressure. Nevertheless the Wasps defence invariably came up with a forthright answer to the promising efforts of Hadley and Baxendell.

In contrast there was an ominous inevitability about Wasps' second try: after Dallaglio capitalised on a Sale error by making ground down the left flank, the Scotland wing Logan showed his pedigree with a forceful swallow-dive, the momentum carrying him over the line.

As if to emphasise Wasps' all-round quality, Rees landed an angled penalty goal from 40 metres to give them a 16-3 half-time lead. Less than four minutes after the interval Sale's uphill task became impossible as they conceded two converted tries in rapid succession.

Golf Cannes Open

Cage tastes victory at last

Michael Britten

STUART CAGE showed that Britain too has up-and-coming talent when he held off the charge of a young compatriot to win his first professional victory in the Cannes Open on Sunday.

The 23-year-old former English Amateur champion from Leeds is no Tiger Woods as yet but had a convincing five-stroke victory, with a closing 66 for a 14-under-par total of 270, as David Carter, one year older and coming back from recent brain surgery, shot a marvellous 62.

That gave Carter a share of second place with Paul Broadhurst, who had a 68, after Jamie Spence had also taken full advantage of a benign calm to score 61 and finish fourth alongside yet another Englishman, Paul Eales.

Cage had taken the lead at the 16th hole of the second round on his way to the second of his four sub-70 returns. Although he was twice caught, and had a four-stroke lead cut to only one at the halfway stage of the final round when he drove into a hazard, the Yorkshireman pulled away from his pursuers with a series of attacking strokes that left him little to do with his putter.

Cricket

Lamb gives a pledge on revamp of county game

Mike Selvey

THE England and Wales Cricket Board has been quick to play down reports that it is considering altering the format of the County Championship to introduce an American-style system.

The report, in a Sunday newspaper, suggests that the new board's chairman, Lord MacLaurin, and its chief executive, Tim Lamb, propose to implement a structure where the top two teams in separate but parallel divisions play off against each other in the manner of baseball's World Series or gridiron's Superbowl, and that this could be in place as early as next season.

The newspaper further quoted MacLaurin as threatening to resign his position should the counties not agree to the plan. But Lamb later stressed that, although the idea had been discussed, it was one of a number of options, and there had been no firm agreement on any of them.

"We have not definitely come up with any conclusions with regard to the county championship," he said, "and to try and give that impression would be misleading.

"No decisions have been taken either about the future of the County Championship or any part of the cricket pyramid. We are not authorised to change the face of English cricket without going through the due process."

The notion that the county system should be tinkered with to make it more competitive is not new. Favoured remedies include splitting the championship into two divisions — with promotion, relegation and play-offs — and the introduction of a regional competition, similar to Australia's Sheffield Shield, as a bridge between county and international cricket. The "Superbowl" idea is a more recent development, and it has further been mooted that the divisions would be agreed each season by drawing lots.

But Lamb insisted: "This American-style system is one which has been discussed, but we have not reached any conclusions about any part of the cricket programme at first-class or recreational level.

"We are getting criticised for something which we have not yet agreed. We have to get our heads together to formulate a plan for cricket with all the other heads. We now have one governing body for the game and we have a unique opportunity to look at the whole of cricket."

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Red Rose blooms

WITH winter chill still in the air but skies clear and blue, a new English cricket season got under way last week, bringing early victories for Durham, Derbyshire and the Red Rose.

Durham were guests of Oxford University at The Parks where the visitors declared at 353 for two, Jon Lewis with an unbeaten 210 — the county's highest first-class individual score. The visitors then bowled out Oxford for 153 and closed their second innings on 144 for three, to which the hosts could reply with only 247, losing by 97 runs.

At Fenner's, Cambridge fared no better against Derbyshire, making 193 in their first innings. The visitors declared at 363 for 7 and then dismissed Cambridge for 156, recording a victory by an innings and 12 runs.

On Friday, Lancashire awoke to IRA bomb scares in Leeds city centre, which later forced their hotel to be evacuated. Battling through traffic jams, they reached Headingley where they found Yorkshire's resistance at the crease considerably more frustrating.

However, the following day Lancashire returned home in triumph, having beaten Yorkshire by six wickets in their Roses friendly. Graham Lloyd was Lancashire's hero with a score of 225 runs in his side's 482 in the first innings. He reached his double century off only 130 balls, hitting 10 sixes. Yorkshire made 289 and 298. Lancashire rattled up the 106 needed for victory for the loss of four wickets. There were also centuries for Mark Butcher and Mark Ramprakash during England A's match against The Rest at Edgbaston.

On the international scene, Mervyn Kitchen, George Sharp, David Shepherd and Peter Willey, England's four representatives on the international panel, have been appointed umpires for the forthcoming Ashes series against Australia. John Hampshire and Ray Julian will oversee the three-match one-day series.

PAKISTANI batsman Aamir Sohail has been suspended for two years by his country's cricket board over fresh allegations he made regarding bribery and betting scandals at the heart of the international side. A disciplinary committee in Lahore found Sohail guilty of violating the board's code of conduct after he had levelled what they concluded were "baseless" charges of match-fixing and betting. Sohail has 90 days to appeal and is taking legal advice.

REIGNING 500cc world champion Michael Doohan edged out Spain's Alex Criville in the Japanese Grand Prix at Suzuka as Repsol Honda took the first four places. The Australian rider took the lead midway through the race but was pressed all the way by Criville. The three-times world champion, bidding for his fourth successive title, crossed the line in 45 mins 11.995 secs — just 0.431 secs ahead of his Spanish rival. Tadayki Okada of Japan was third, ahead of his compatriot Takuma Aoki.

RONNIE O'SULLIVAN earned himself a minimum of $240,000 in 5 min 20 secs by compiling the fastest ever maximum break in professional snooker at the World Championship in Sheffield. The 21-year-old from Essex, is also likely to scoop all the $30,000 highest-break prize for his 147, which he compiled on the way to beating Mick Price 10-6 to reach the competition's last 16.

FIFTEEN capped players are included in the England Rugby Union squad for the six-match tour of Argentina, despite the unavailability of 18 internationals on Lions duty in South Africa. Ben Clarke, Mike Catt, Jonathan Sleighthome, Chris Sheasby and the skipper Phil de Glanville are among them. Bath have eight England tourists, Wasps and Sale four each. Harlequins are represented only by Rory Jenkins.

Scotland, who play four provincial sides and Zimbabwe on a tour running parallel to the Lions', have 14 uncapped players in their 30-man squad, the surprise being the inclusion of the Under-21 centre Jamie Mayer.

FORMER boxing champion Chris Eubank was sentenced at Lewes crown court to 200 hours of community service for causing grievous bodily harm to two women who were badly burned at a New Year's Eve fireworks display staged by him on Brighton beach in 1995. Eubank said he was "extremely and deeply ashamed for what had happened to the girls".

Football results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP Arsenal 1 Blackburn Rovers 1; Aston Villa 1 Tottenham Hotspur 1; Chelsea 2 Leicester City 1; Liverpool 1 Manchester United 3; Middlesbrough 0 Sunderland 1; Newcastle United 3 Derby County 1; Nottingham Forest 1 Leeds United 1; Sheffield Wed 3 Wimbledon 1; Southampton 2 Coventry City 2; West Ham United 2 Everton 2; Coventry 1 Arsenal 1 (Mon). **Leading positions:** 1, Man Utd (34 played-69 points); 2, Arsenal (36-65); 3, Liverpool (35-64).

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE Division One Bradford 0 Birminghm 2; Charlton 2 Portsmth 1; Crystal Pal 1 Barnsley 1; Grimsby 2 Reading 0; Huddersfld 0 W.B.A. 0; Man City 0 Q.P.R. 3; Oldham 0 Bolton 0; Oxford 2 Swindon 0; Stoke 2 Port Vale 0; Tranmere 1 Sheff Utd 1; Wolves 4 Southend 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Bolton (44-94); 2, Barnsley (43-77); 3, Wolves (43-72).

Division Two Brentford 0 Crewe 2; Bristol Rvrs 1 Notts Co 0; Burnley 3 Rotherham 3; Bury 1 Peterboro 0; Chesterfld 1 Millwall 0; Gillingham 2 Blackpool 3; Luton 2 Shrewsbry 0; Plymouth 2 Walsall 0; Preston 1 Stockport 0; Wrexham 3 Watford 1; Wycombe 1 Bournemth 1; York 0 Bristol City 3. **Leading positions:** 1, Bury (43-79); 2, Brentford (43-74); 3, Luton (43-73).

Division Three Barnet 3 Cardiff 1; Cambridge 1 Brighton 1; Chester 1 Scarboro 0; Darlington 1 Hartlepool 2; Doncaster 0 Fulham 0; Hereford 1 Torquay 1; Hull 3 Leyton O 2; Lincoln 2 Sc'thorpe 0; Northmptn 4 Exeter 1; Swansea 3 Mansfield 2. **Leading positions:** 1, Wigan (44-81); 2, Fulham (44-81); 3, Carlisle (43-78).

SCOTTISH LEAGUE Premier Division Celtic 3 Aberdeen 0; Hearts 1 Dunfmline 1; Kilmarnk 1 Hibernian 1; Motherwell 1 Dundee U 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Rangers (33-77); 2, Celtic (33-69); 3, Dundee Utd (33-57).

Division One Clydebank 1 Falkirk 2; Dundee 2 St Mirren 0; Morton 1 Airdrie 1; Stirling A 2 Partick 0; St Johnstn 3 East Fife 2. **Leading positions:** 1, St Johnstone (33-71); 2, Airdrie (33-59); 3, Dundee (33-53).

Division Two Berwick 0 Hamilton 5; Clyde 1 Ayr 1; Livingston 1 Dumbarton 2; Stenhsmr 0 Queen Sth 3; Stranraer 0 Brechin 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Ayr (33-70); 2, Hamilton (33-69); 3, Livingston (33-67).

Division Three Albion 1 Arbroath 2; E Stirling 0 Inverness 3; Montrose 1 Queens Pk 1; Ross Co 1 Forfar 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Inverness CT (33-76); 2, Forfar (33-68); 3, Ross Co (33-68).

Football Coca-Cola Cup

Claridge has final say to sink Boro

STEVE CLARIDGE, the jobbing footballer from below stairs, won the Coca-Cola Cup 1-0 for Leicester City at Hillsborough last week and with it a place in next season's Uefa Cup, *writes David Lacey*.

A weary-looking Middlesbrough were left to contemplate an FA Cup semi-final replay against Chesterfield on the same ground this week and beyond that an increasingly exhausting struggle to avoid relegation.

The 31-year-old Claridge struck in the ninth minute of extra-time when it began to look as if chances missed earlier in the game, notably by Heskey, who hit a post, would force the teams into the first penalty shoot-out in English cup final history. In a well practised move, Walsh headed back Parker's free-kick from the left, and Claridge volleyed past Roberts.

Claridge may not possess socks that stay up but his sense of timing remains impeccable. It was he, of course, who brought Leicester back into the Premiership when he won last season's First Division play-off final against Crystal Palace at the end of the extra half-hour with a shot off a shin.

Having taken so long to get into the Coca-Cola Cup final at Wembley, and being rescued then by Heskey's equaliser in the 118th minute, Leicester were well worth last week's victory, even if they did take an unconscionable time to achieve it. After Middlesbrough failed to turn early territorial advantage into goals, Leicester should have virtually ended the contest by half-time.

Hard though Ravanelli, Middlesbrough's scorer at Wembley, worked he was rarely the force he can be, and again his links with Juninho were regularly interrupted by Kaamark's continued and relentless marking of the young Brazilian.

Although the spectacle was never going to be a classic, it was a distinct improvement on the original final. Much of this was due to the greater speed with which Leicester became an attacking force.

Even so, a combination of superior defending, by Walsh and Prior for Leicester and, until he tired, Pearson for Middlesbrough, demanded attacking subtleties that neither side could produce in any quantity. Until the goal, both teams wasted their free-kicks and corners and the quality of centres and final passes was universally poor.

Claridge said afterwards: "This is beyond my wildest dreams. When I scored the winner in last year's play-off final that was fantastic, but now lightning has struck twice. This victory is wonderful for the whole club."

Football Premiership: Liverpool 1 Manchester Utd 3

United they stand on title threshold

David Lacey

MANCHESTER United's victory over Liverpool on Saturday morning last week confirmed the feeling that has persisted since they beat Arsenal 2-1 nearly two months ago, namely that whatever their Premiership pursuers achieved, United's greater depth of playing strength would always keep the pack at bay.

At Liverpool they were without four of their regular players for a game billed — wrongly, as it transpired — as their biggest test of the season. Giggs, May and Irwin, all recovering from injuries, were kept back in the hope that they would be fully fit for this week's European Cup semi-final tie against Borussian Dortmund at Old Trafford, and Solskjaer, United's most in-form striker, never left the bench.

Ferguson played Keane in front of his back four, used Scholes to support Cole and Cantona, and had Beckham and Butt providing a nice balance in midfield. United's performance, workmanlike rather than inspired, reflected the selection, but it was still too much for Liverpool. Their 3-1 defeat, compounded of solid teamwork by the winners and crass defending and goalkeeping by the losers, was one of United's easier successes at Anfield.

Thus, and with surprising suddenness, United's championship prospects moved from probability to near-certainty. At breakfast last Saturday they still needed 11 points from five matches; by teatime the target had been reduced to five from four. Liverpool were left to scrap with Arsenal, and perhaps Newcastle, for second place. After Blackburn's draw at Highbury, only the timing of Ferguson's latest triumph remains open to question.

Liverpool's dwindling championship aspirations were accompanied by the sound of departing feet as their supporters filed out of the ground long before the end. Roy Evans's players continue to underachieve, hence Anfield's reported aim of hiring a new coach while keeping faith with Evans.

Last Saturday the saddest sound was not the ironic cheering that greeted James almost every time the accident-prone goalkeeper caught the ball, but the groan that went up more than once when a promising passing movement reached Barnes. Ten years ago, the sight of Barnes hovering on the ball would produce a hum of expectation, but now he is perceived by many Liverpool supporters to be a worn part in need of replacement.

Some might feel the same about Wright, given the centre-back's failure to challenge Pallister as the United defender headed goals from Beckham's corners in the 13th and 42nd minutes. Such slack defending both gave United the initiative and denied Liverpool a proper recovery after Barnes's head had glanced in an equaliser.

At half-time nobody could have blamed James for Liverpool's plight; although when a goalkeeper is having a bad time generally his defenders often find the uncertainty a distraction, half-suspecting another catastrophe in the offing. Sure enough, James flapped feebly at Gary Neville's deep centre two minutes past the hour, allowing Cole an easy header into an empty net.

Evans refused to condemn James, despite the gaffes that had lost Liverpool their previous home game against Coventry and contributed to the 3-0 Cup Winners' Cup defeat by Paris St-Germain. But before next season Liverpool will surely have to reconsider their goalkeeping strength.

Fowler, suspended for the rest of the Premiership programme after last week's dismissal at Everton, threw his boots into the Kop after the final whistle on Saturday. Lacking support until Collymore came off the bench early in the second half, he had a disconsolate morning and scuffed a rare chance that might have given Liverpool a 2-1 lead.

McManaman, who shot wildly wide in the sixth minute, scarcely did any better. True, Cantona and Cole (twice) were equally profligate, but United, passing the ball more positively and with the excellent midfielder Butt epitomising the determination Liverpool are struggling to rediscover, always had plenty in reserve.

"We've got to earn the right to be champions," said Ferguson, "and I think we came to the right place to do that."

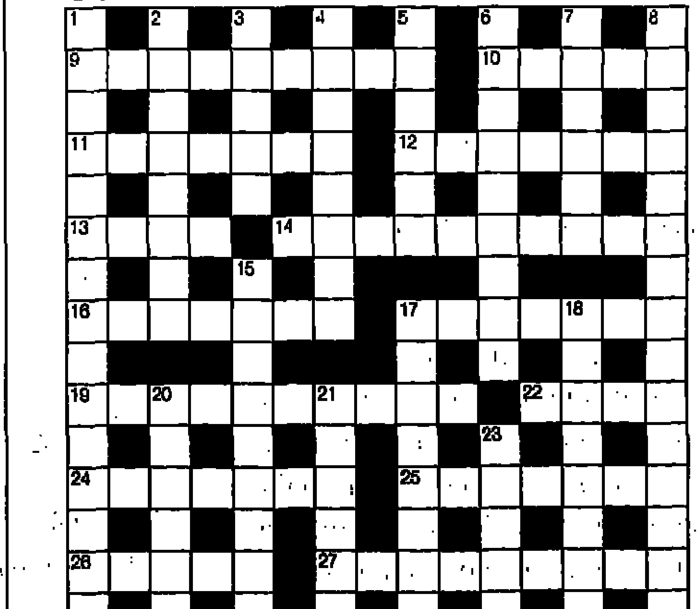
Meanwhile United are to press ahead with their fight to have the season extended beyond May 11 to ease their fixture congestion that has them down to play four games in the last nine days of the season.

After the Premier League rejected their request, the club appealed to the Football Association, who said that the matter was outside their jurdisction. United disagree and have invoked FA rules under which a panel of three arbitrators will decide if the FA does have the power to adjudicate. A decision on this was expected this week.

● Things are really looking up for Carlisle United. They secured promotion to the Second Division earlier this month and on Sunday they beat Colchester United 4-3 in a penalty shoot-out in the final of the Auto Windscreens Shield at Wembley to clinch the first knock-out trophy in the club's 94-year history.

Round of applause . . . Cole applauds United's supporters at Anfield while Schmeichel acknowledges their plaudits PHOTO: MICHAEL STEELE

Cryptic crossword by Janus



Across

9 Gaunt flier (9)
10 British industry's Asiatic component (5)
11 One who might force out former player (7)
12 Biased to some degree (7)
13 He wrote about four in party (4)
14 Puts a ban on Dickensian family scapegrace (5,5)
16 Promised silence in dire need (7)
17 Man, for example, of ecclesiastical eminence (7)
19 Perceive rise in value (10)
22 Told to run away from insect (4)
24 Put out claim to island of Mohammedan origin (7)
25 Pledge given by composer in outset (7)
26 Where Scotsman may back seafarers (5)
27 Academic term for one who tries to go over border (9)

Down

1 Quick surgical work on naval manoeuvres (5,10)
2 Said to be in want of massaging (8)
3 Divides up leather thong (6)
4 Shocked when novice began to go out (8)
5 Cancer, for instance — king is engrossed in subject (6)
6 Yet another mistake from this cricketer? (5,4)
7 Water-spirit found in Europe to some extent (6)
8 Retrograde order in the main (4,5,6)
15 Contract with mere agent? (9)
17 Touching, though it may be a fallacy (8)
18 Complaints from chaps in tails perhaps (8)
20 Friends taking in first-class dance hall (6)
21 Move to action when audibly exposed (6)
23 Command sequence (5)

Last week's solution

CAPTOR WARPAINT
CLOVE HATTRICKS
SPEEDTRAP EYRIE
RABBITWARREN
CONGLOMERATE
REEVE ANNOTATED
WATERFALL KARMA
RETICENT UNBEND

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Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and mailing offices. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.